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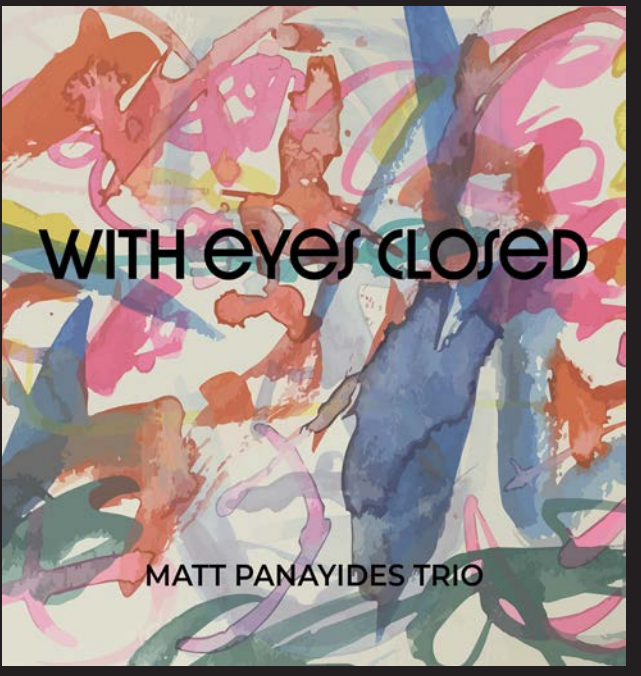
With Eyes Closed

the fourth album by guitarist Matt Panayides and his first trio recording.



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

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

"Panayides demonstrates imaginative compositions and fluid interplay, delivering a compelling trio performance." - Jazz Journal

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

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

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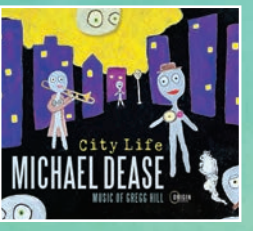
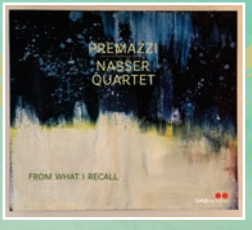
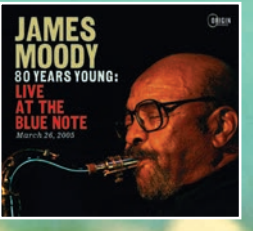


MICHAEL DEASE
CITY LIFE: MUSIC OF GREGG HILL
LINDA MAY HAN OH
JEFF 'TAIN' WATTS
NICOLE GLOVER
GEOFFREY KEEZER
BROOKLYN DEASE



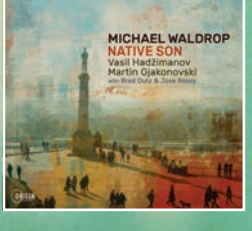
PREMAZZI / NASSER QUARTET
FROM WHAT I RECALL
KYLE NASSER
SIMONA PREMAZZI
NOAH GARABEDIAN
JAY SAWYER



JAMES MOODY
80 YEARS YOUNG: LIVE AT THE BLUE NOTE, March 26, 2005
DAVID HAZELTINE, TODD COOLMAN, ADAM NUSSBAUM, JON FADDIS, PAQUITO D'RIVERA, SLIDE HAMPTON, RANDY BRECKER, CEDAR WALTON

DAWN CLEMENT
DELIGHT
BUSTER WILLIAMS
MATT WILSON

ALON FARBER HAGIGA
DREAMS I DREAM
KATIA TOOBOOL
ASSAF KAKIMI
YONATAN ROSEN



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NATIVE SON
VASIL HADZIMANOV
MARTIN GJAKONOVSKI
BRAD DUTZ
JOSE ROSSY

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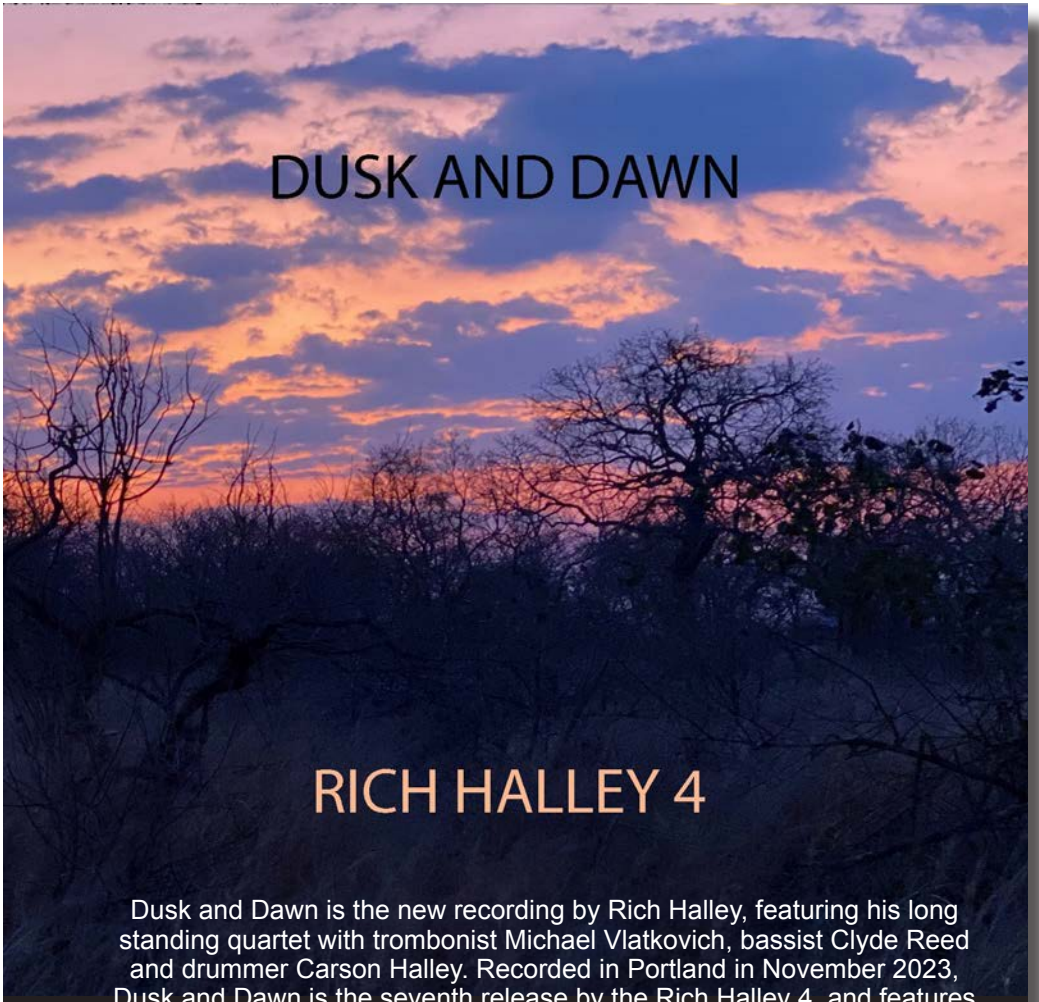


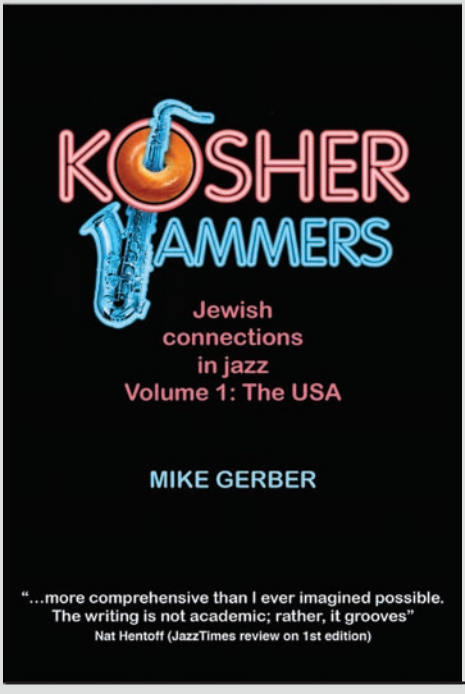
RICH HALLEY 4

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

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

"One of the major tenor saxophonists of our time."
Tom Hull, tomhull.com

"Heartland American jazz of the very highest order."
Brian Morton, Point of Departure



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

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

"A mightily comprehensive overview of the influence of Jews in jazz."
Howard Mandel, president – Jazz Journalists Association

"Countless original interviews, including one of the last interviews with Artie Shaw."
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

THE SPIRITUAL PATH TO FINDING YOUR VOICE
By: NORA MCCARTHY
Creative Vocal Artist, Composer, Poet, Lyricist, Actor, Educator, Author

"My amazing teacher, Nora McCarthy once told me a phrase that shifted something inside me and thus, over time, changed my entire course in music. 'What the heart has the capacity to feel, can be translated into sound.' It's that simple, though not at all easy. Let this phrase sit with you a bit and hopefully it will stay with you as it did with me. Thank you Nora for giving me this precious gift, I will never forget it."

Varya Dominici, Singer, Songwriter, Poet

"What Nora McCarthy has gathered together here is a monumental achievement. It teaches us techniques and exercises, guides us in our thinking and meditating, inspires us, and even helps us find the core (or heart, or soul) of our genuine voice."

Christopher Hirschmann Brandt, Poet, Writer, Translator; Man of the Theatre, College Professor, Lecturer, Fordham University

The book is dedicated to avant-garde and experimental artists who stay true to the art of singing, encouraging them to embrace their unique voices and creativity. ***Nora McCarthy***

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Jimmi Roger Pedersen bass
David Sundby drums

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Signs and Symbols

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

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

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

Once Upon A Time
(Strouse/Adams)
By
Laura Ainsworth

@Laura Ainsworth

Watch the video on YouTube

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

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Greg Abate

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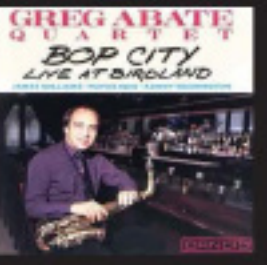
Phil Woods



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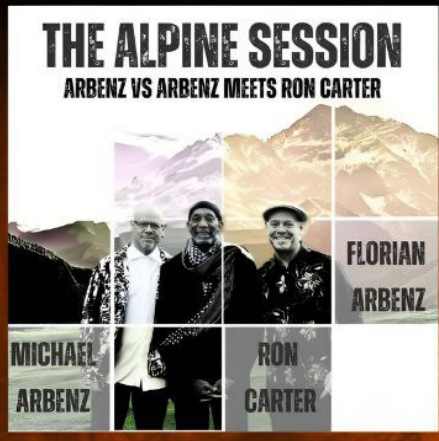

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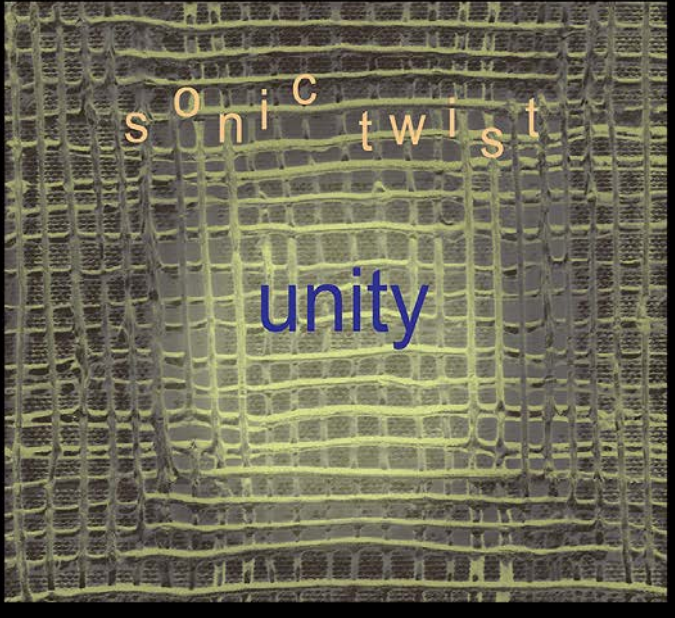

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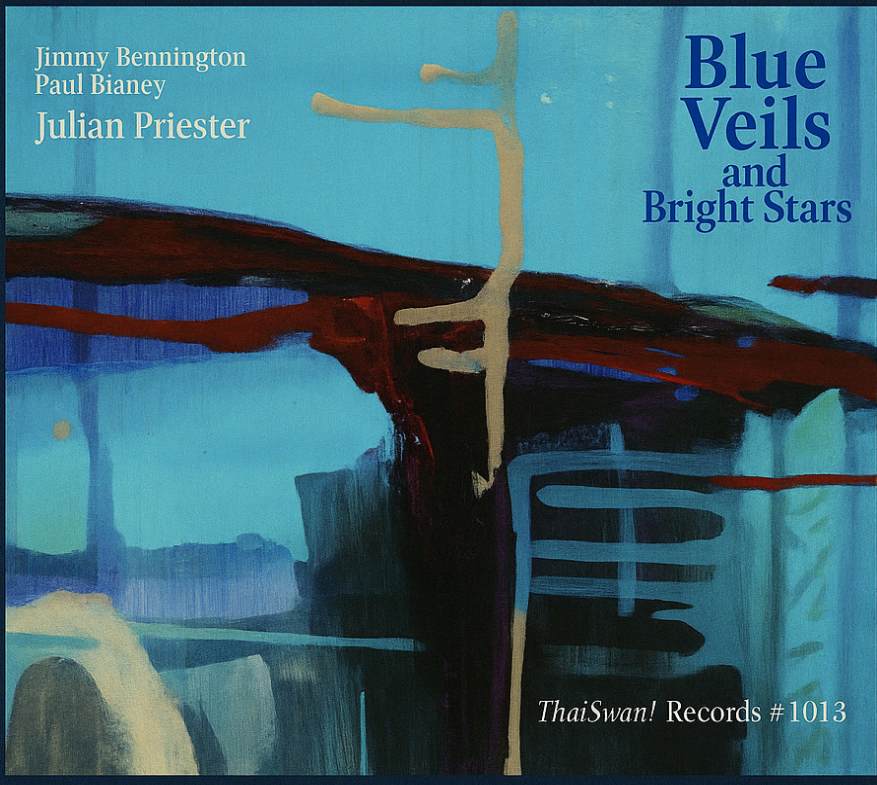

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Downbeat

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

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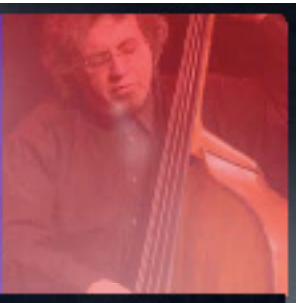

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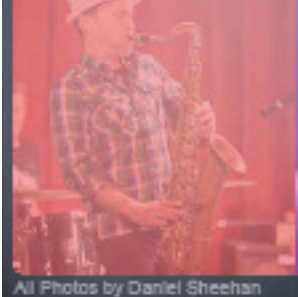


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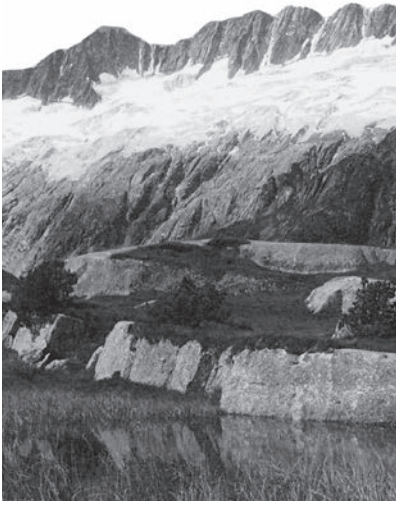

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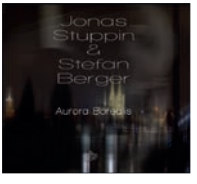

JHM 314
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Contributors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CADENCE

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

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David Haney, Colin Haney, Tana Keildh
Art Department: Alex Haney
Advisory Committee:
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FRONT COVER

Clockwise from upper left

Marshall Allen
Nnenna Freelon
Ron Carter
Joe Lovano
Jimmy Bennington

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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ALBUM REVIEWS FROM ABE GOLDSTIEN

Short Takes - Philadelphia

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

Short Takes - Philadelphia

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

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

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

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

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

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

Short Takes - Philadelphia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ken Weiss

New York Jazz Stories at the Public

April 20, 2025 Live at Joe's Pub at the Public Theater in New York. Stories from Cadence Magazine presented live on stage with improvised music. Photos by Robert Sutherland-Cohen

Adam Lane, Cheryl Pyle Photo credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

Adam Lane, Photo credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

Jimmy Bennington, Photo credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

David Haney, Photo credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

Joe Lovano, Photo credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

Judi Silvano, Photo Credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

Judi Silvano, Joe Lovano, Jimmy Bennington, Adam Lane, Photo Credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

Judi Silvano, David Haney, Joe Lovano, Jimmy Bennington, Adam Lane,
Photo Credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

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

Review and photos by Ken Weiss

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

André 3000 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Marshall Allen celebrates Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Marshall Allen at 101 Years

Son Ronnie Boyd celebrates Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Birthday Cake Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Marshall Allen at 101 Years

Dick Griffin - Marshall Allen Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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

BILLIE HOLIDAY - SEEKING BILLIE

by Mike Gerber

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The song most associated with Billie, 'Strange Fruit', the harrowing anti-lynching classic written for her by left-wing Jewish teacher Lewis Allen, Changamiré had no desire to cover. "It is one of those recordings," she told me, "that I think cannot be improved upon. I feel that way about Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On' and Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come". To me, those songs are sacredly attached to the artist. In addition, though it has an unfortunate, overarching timeless message, 'Strange Fruit' references a specific period of time. As a Black woman in a different time in history, I personally experience racism in more subtle ways and have more publicly experienced heartache surrounding murders at the hands of authorities. So, I wrote 'Where's the Sun' and 'Hardened Heart' to express those feelings and seek help for relief."

Seeking Billie: The Unusual Tribute to Billie Holiday (Sonnig Records) is available as a digital edition via the various music streaming services. A Collector's Edition vinyl LP can be purchased for $40 direct from Changamiré's website at WhenSunnyGetsBlue.com

Seeking Billie Holiday

Changamire Live with Quintet

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

Berlioz by August Prinzhofer, 1845

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

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

Ron Carter Interview Almost is Not Good Enough By Ken Weiss

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ron Catrter
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Ron Catrter
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Ron Carter

Ron Catrter
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Ron Carter

Ron Catrter
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even exchange of ideas and understanding responsibilities in groups.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: What are your pet peeves on the bandstand?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Carter: [Laughs]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Carter: Eye-opening. On our first job, we were on a bus, driving to a gig in Washington, DC, and the bus pulls up to the back of the Howard Johnson's restaurant. Someone got off the bus and went into the back entrance of the restaurant. This was my first time down south, and I said, 'Man, where's this guy going?' And it was explained to this young guy in the band that this area of the country, where we were going, they weren't interested in having Black people walk into the front of the restaurant. So, the only way we were going to get something to eat at this stop is if someone goes into the back, orders the food and picks it up. And that was astonishing to me to know that this is what I'm walking into. I got disinvited from the Classical scene, and I'm now in the Jazz scene where I seemed to be on my way to being accepted as a part of the community, and this guy has to go in the back of the establishment because they don't allow him in the front. It was just amazing, it just stunned me. That was the first time, but certainly not the last time, that that's happened to me. As near as four years ago, before this pandemic took over, I was subbing for someone at a society room in New York, and I got there three hours early with my gear. There was no one there but me and the help, and I'm headed for the front door. I get the door open, and a guy says, "Hey, where are you going?" I said, 'I'm trying to get to the bandstand to get set up.' He said, "You guys got to go in the back." I said, 'The back of what?' He said, "The back of the club." I said, 'Now wait, I don't know who you are but I'm the only bass player in this band and if the band wants me to show up, they have to find someone who's gonna let me go in the front door because I'm not going in the back door.' I don't go in my own back door, man. Why would I go in their back door? I told him, 'If you want, you can call someone who has the authority to give you the authority to let me walk into the front of the club. If not, I'm going home.' So, the idea of that happening is not new to me, and I'm sure that many African

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: Another artist you've historically paired well with is saxophonist Houston Person, with whom you've made over a handful of albums with. What's your attraction to bass/saxophone duets and how does Person elevate your work?

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

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

Why name it that way and what were you hoping to express with that work?
Carter: I thought that would be a nice tipping of my hat to a person who was responsible for a lot of my values and he, in fact, did wear a bowtie. It was a nice reminder of a parental influence that I enjoy to this day.
Cadence: The Brandenburg Concerto [1995, Blue Note] was your third Classical album. How did Blue Note respond when they heard you planned a classical work as your next project? Were they completely happy with that?
Carter: Yes, I had done a lot of Jazz projects before this one came up and the producer, Hitoshi Namekata, who was the Blue Note person in Japan, he trusted me implicitly because I delivered on all the projects I had been offered before. I thought that he had such trust in me after all these years of working, not just under my projects but other projects through Blue Note. He trusted my judgement. He trusted my call, so to speak. I told him, 'I want to play this Classical kind of record with the Brandenburg.' He said, "Well, what are you going to do with that?" I said, 'What I want to do is kind of elongate certain parts of the piece that I think a bass solo can fit in and when that's done, go back to the part that the cello player is going to play, according to the score, and just have it feel like another piece. And I'm comfortable that if Bach was alive, he'd say, "Hey man, how'd you do that?"' So, I went in with the sixteen-piece string orchestra, and because I had altered the parts, we read it through to make sure I had done it right, and what your hearing is the first and only take of the pieces. I just thought that we could handle that kind of stuff if I got it right. And interestingly enough, the orchestra did not hear me, only the conductor heard me, because I didn't want the orchestra wondering what I was doing. Don't worry about that now. [Laughs] In this case, play the Xerox. [Laughs] Kermit Moore, who passed away a couple years ago, was the conductor who was a really big Duke Ellington enthusiast, and he trusted my judgement. It was a really incredible record. There were some, I'm avoiding saying dumb, comments from part of the Classical people and my response to those people was that until Bach tells me that it wasn't okay, I'm okay with it. I'm really dedicated to the concept of the album and I won't accept the nasty view of what am I doing playing this music? I already heard that, man, way before they were born, and they're not going to change my view now.
Cadence: You've written many great compositions, including "Einbahnstrasse," which means one-way traffic in German. What inspired that work?
Carter: As I started doing my own projects, I was learning how to write. I was learning how to get a concept for a record that I was completely responsible for. I was responsible for everything but the artwork. I was responsible for the personnel, for booking the studio, for spending the budget wisely, for trying to conduct and play at the same time, for trying to plan a program for these people who I hired to make my music become a reality outside of what was between my ears, and along the way, I was learning how to write for this kind

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: How do you utilize piccolo bass?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: What are your interests outside of music?

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

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

Carter: I'll take it. [Laughs]

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

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

Cadence: The final questions have been given to me by others to ask you: Ben Williams (bass) asked: "Is there anyone that you would've like to work with that you haven't already?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

JIMMY BENNINGTON, DRUMMER, BANDLEADER

Conducted by David Haney
Transcribed by Kenan Herbert

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

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

JB: Hello! Thank you for having me today.

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

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

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

JB: *Laughs*

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

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

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

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

CAD: It's the hardest part.

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

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

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

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

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

CAD: We take what we can get.

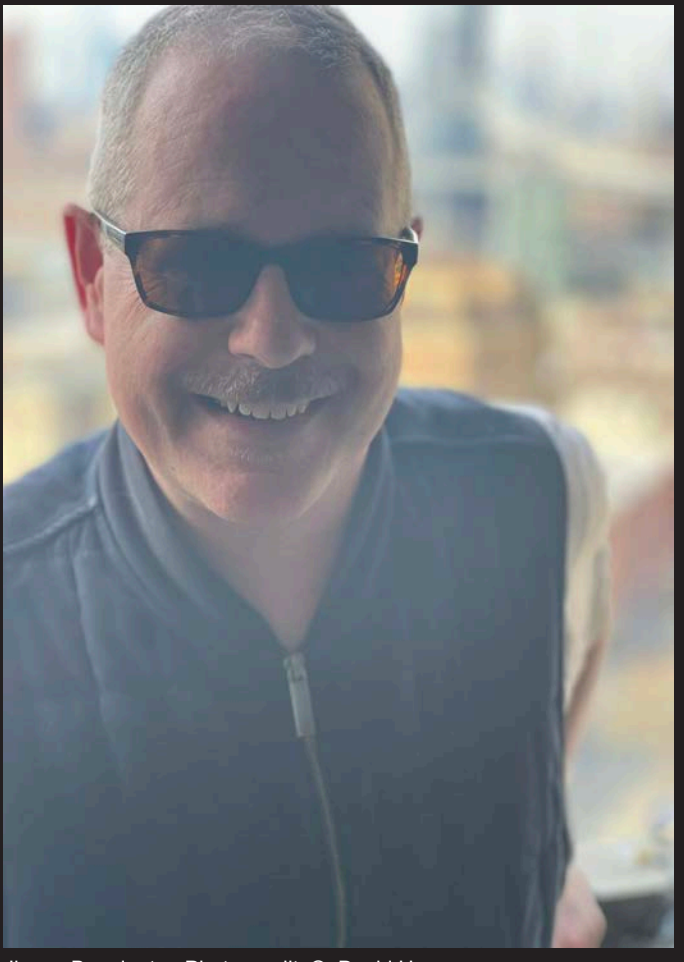
JB: And I must clarify, as you and I know, it's not easy. There are not record labels champing at the bit to get a hold of our music. But I think that in the modern day, things have changed so much that anyone can release their music. For better or for worse. But at least we can't be stopped from doing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

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

JB: Exactly.

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

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



Jimmy Bennington Photo credit © David Haney

#BandCamp
www.jbcolourandsound.com

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

CAD: How old was he at that point?

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

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

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

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

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

Jimmy Bennington Photo credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CAD: It was a big step down in audio.
JB: Maybe the young kids have a cassette player for the fun of it, and older heads like us may have one, but most people are like, "A cassette player?!" So either way, it's the typical thing of musicians, artists, and composers trying to find the medium for their music. The music is the same, it's coming from the same ancient wellspring, but we've got to keep up with the way we get it to the people.
CAD: We don't change. The music doesn't change.
JB: I think it changes. It undulates. Music is an interesting thing, because people are individual. I always like to imagine that if you went to a tavern or a pub somewhere in the middle ages, there were musicians in the corner just playing. I'm certain that you'd hear some of what we call jazz, you'd hear some polyrhythms, you'd hear harmony, atonal, you'd hear everything. That was then, and then a guy like Cecil Taylor comes out and goes, "Check me out!" And I'm like, well, it is great, but let's just say that we don't know what they were doing in Sumeria. I have quite a few more titles coming out, and I would imagine my next conundrum will be how to promote that, how to get it to the people. Bandcamp does not seem to offer a boost option or a marketing option. Artists come across all kinds of people in their career. One guy plays the flute, but he doesn't know anything about graphic design, and he has to find someone, and unless he's loaded with dough, he's gotta do it on the cheap. So he looks around his circle of friends, and someone says, "Oh, I know about that." But the musician is always seeking out those who can help in the production side of things, the promotion side of things.
CAD: So I'm looking at, I'm sorry...I got distracted, Jimmy. I'm looking at your Bandcamp site. And there's an album with you, Perry Robinson, and Ed Schuller. I'm curious where that was recorded.
JB: It should say "Live at Jimmy's." It was a club in Manhattan, a long-running club, and the guy just passed away…Dee Pop was his name, and he booked that series, and I think it was called the Dee Pop Music Series. But either way, the opening act for us was one Gerald Cleaver, and his group. And then we came on and played, and you know, that is, by the way, where I got a chance to meet and play with Dave Sewelson.
CAD: That was going to be my next question, because it says 'Recorded February 4, 2008 by Dave Sewelson', and he appears briefly with the group at the end.
JB: Exactly. I didn't see or talk to him for many years after that, until I was a guest on his Give The Drummer Radio show, which you and I just appeared on. That was a kind of reunion of sorts. When I first did his radio broadcast, we played via Zoom, so when he played, there was a delay. You know, that's the computer, that's how it goes. But when we all recently played as a trio together (Brooklyn 4.19.2025), I was really impressed by his command of that baritone…I mean, it was really great!

CAD: Yes. Very specific, and choice, and good ears on it.
JB: Even the harmonica at the end, I was surprised that it sounded almost organ-like. So 'Live at Jimmy's was, as musicians do, it was kind of our rehearsal before that group went up to CIMP to record ('Symbols, Strings, and Magic', CIMP#379). So that was a chance for us to meet Ed. It really turned out to be a nice first encounter. I was thrilled because Ed was a hero of mine long before I'd met him. I'd heard him on a lot of records, and to be playing with him was really amazing. And Perry I was in awe of from the start anyway. It so happened that we got along really well, and he was down for coming along with me on some of my things.
CAD: I'm going to put up some links to the Bandcamp site. It's some really good stuff. I got a chance to listen to 'Portraits and Silhouettes', when we did the WFMU show, and I have to tell you, that was it boy…that was…Bam!
JB: It's really, if we talk about a turning point in my own recording career, that's one of my gems. That recording is unquestionably a classic. The Wire gave it a great review. It's been well-received. All About Jazz, they gave it an Honorable Mention of that year. So that's one notable thing, to celebrate this 35 year anniversary, I'm releasing a physical CD with the rest of the material from the trio that was recorded with Julian back in 2005. So, it's myself, Julian Priester, and Paul Blaney on bass. It's a different thing altogether, so those who like the first one, you're going to like this one.
CAD: So the first one 'Portraits and Silhouettes' (ThatSwan! Records #1005), just to be clear, is a duet album with Julian, the great trombonist Julian Priester. And boy you two, just the way you use silence, and the way you sound together is special.
JB: Oh man, it's one of my prizes in the stable! And again, something like that helps you to keep going. Because you can say, 'Well, I got ONE! I gotta really try for some others.' And, by the way, I think some of the things you and I have done have a considerable charm, and I love to listen to them ('Our Dialogue; live at the Tugboat' / 'Another Friend; the music of Herbie Nichols'). I hadn't heard it for a while, and when we did that show with Sewelson on WFMU, I felt, "Man, this has held up over time!" So that's coming up… I'm not sure if I'm going to call it the Julian Priester Trio and just give it to him, or call it just our names, or what. I'm a bit confused as to what to do after all these years.
CAD: It's none of my business, but I think you should do just the names, because if you put somebody else's name, it's kind of like they were fronting it…and they weren't. I had a gig with Julian at Catano's Hotel in New York, and it was my gig, Julian was my guest, but they just decided to promote it as The Julian Priester Quartet. And Julian made a very specific point, he got in front of the microphone and said, "Folks, I want you to know, this is not my quartet. This is so-and-so's quartet, he worked very hard, etc., etc…" but it was important to him artistically to let people know, 'you're kind of taking advantage of my name here', folks.

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

CAD: Great soul. Great human being.

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

('Blue Veils and Bright Stars', ThatSwan! Records #1013)
Interview taken via Cadence Media Records
Podcast 110 - Conversation with Jimmy Bennington (Audio Avail on BandCamp)
Portland, Oregon to Chicago, Illinois 5.6.25

RECORDINGS:

Doc Peters (s) – The Invention of Gospel Jazz the Evolution of Jazz – Kimberly Records-TX (1995)
Seth Paynter (s) –Spice – Synchronized Snake Charming Music – TX (1996)
Jimmy Bennington – Midnight Choir – OA2 Records – OA2 22007 (2003)
Jimmy Bennington/ David Haney – Our Dialogue – ThatSwan! #1003 (2006)
Jimmy Bennington – Jazz Kaleidoscope; live at On the House – Solo Drums- ThatSwan! #1004 (2006)
Jimmy Bennington / Julian Priester – Portraits and Silhouettes – ThatSwan! #1005 (2007)
Jimmy Bennington Trio – Another Friend; the Music of Herbie Nichols – w/ David Haney, Michael Bisio, ThatSwan! #1006 (2007)
Jimmy Bennington/ Perry Robinson Quartet – The Spirits at Belle's – Cadence Jazz Records – CJR1219 (2009)
Jimmy Bennington Trio – Symbols, Strings, and Magic – w/ Perry Robinson, Ed Schuller - CIMP #379 (2010)
Jimmy Bennington/ Steve Cohn – No Lunch in Hackensack – Friends of Unseen Rain – foUR9979 (2010)
Jimmy Bennington Trio w/ Daniel Carter, Ed Schuller – One More Beautiful Ballad – CIMP#398 (2013)
Jimmy Bennington / Demian Richardson Trio – Exotic Coda - w/ Ken Filiano -

CIMP#403 (2014)
Jimmy Bennington Trio – The Walk to Montreuil – w/ Jobic LeMasson, Benjamin Duboc - Cadence Jazz Records – CJR#1236 (2013)
Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Boom! Live at the Bop Shop – w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Jerome Croswell, Ed Schuller - CIMPoL #5043 (2017)
Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – A Little While in Chicago – w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Jerome Croswell, Ed Schuller – CIMP#417 (2018)
Jimmy Bennington/ Steve Cohn – Albany Park – Slam – SLAMCD#587 (2018)
Jimmy Bennington/ Steve Cohn/ Ed Schuller – New Jersey Freebie – Slam Records – SLAMCD#596 (2019)
Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Live at the Jazz Estate – w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Dustin Laurenzi, Davi Priest- Spacetonic Records #00003 (2019)
SVOBODNI – Out in the Taiga at Night – w/ Phil Hunger - ThatSwan! Records #1007 (2020)
Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Live at Andy's – w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Artie Black, Dustin Laurenzi, Mike Harmon - ThatSwan! Records #1009 (2020)
Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Everlasting Belle – w/ James Cook, Dustin Laurenzi, Artie Black, Davi Priest - ThatSwan! Records #1010 (2021)
Cook/Priest/Bennington/Cruz/Hunger- Insurrection! – Unknown Garden (2019)
SVOBODNI II – Mercenary Blues – w/ Phil Hunger, Brian Seyler, Davi Priest - ThatSwan! Records #1011 (2021)
Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Churchbells; live at the Green Mill –w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Artie Black, Dustin Laurenzi, Mike Harmon - Cadence Jazz Records – CJR1270 (2022)
SVOBODNI III – The Return to Catalhoyuk – w/ Phil Hunger, Brian Seyler, Dan Thatcher - ThatSwan! Records #1012 (2024)
Jimmy Bennington/ Paul Blaney/ Julian Priester – Blue Veils and Bright Stars – ThatSwan! Records #1013
Jimmy Bennington/ Perry Robinson – WNUR – ThatSwan! #1014 (TBR)

SINGLES:

Jimmy Bennington/ Seth Paynter – Sad Drums/ Bitter Drums; Ballad for Sierra Leone – ThatSwan! sing#001 (2016)
Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Tear It Down, Then Play A Ballad – w/ Daniel Carter, Brian Smith - ThatSwan! sing#002 (2016)
Jimmy Bennington/ Steve Cohn – Hello, I'm Johnny Caesche – ThatSwan! Records sing#003 (2017)
Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Belles de Nuit – w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Ben Boye - ThatSwan! sing#004 (2017)
Jimmy Bennington/ Samuel Hasting – One for Peace – ThatSwan! sing#005 (2018)
Jimmy Bennington/ Perry Robinson – Raga Roni – from the rec. WNUR – ThatSwan! Sing#006 (TBR)

David Haney and Jimmy Bennington Photo credit © David Haney

CHRISTOPH IRNIGER - SAXOPHONE

Interview by Ludwig vanTrikt

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interview: Christoph Irniger

Photo credit © Gian Marco Castelberg

transcribed solos. Imitating is always a good plan to start on something new. Another field I am constantly working on is composition. It's like a muscle, which you can train to get stronger and it was always very important to me, beyond composing itself, but also for developing a personal language on the instrument and of course a vision as artist.
Something I found very interesting is the idea of voice leading. My compositions are built mostly out of single lines, such as a melody and a bass line and harmonies evolve out of these lines (voices) played together. So you have recognizable melodies and harmonical richness at the same time, which gives the improviser or the improvisers (depending on how many are playing at the same time) more options to create worlds between relaxation and tension or openness and density.
Guillermo Klein told me to analyze, study and re-write Bach Chorals, which I still do and helps a lot for understanding, hearing and having new ideas.
Cadence: I want to double back on the expansion of your orchestral language but in the mean time let's talk about the viability of the cd format. This interview is taking place while you have a 2025 CD on the Intakt label; "HUMAN INTELLIGENCE LIVE" (Intakt CD 434). Please explain why you continue to release your music on disc? Do you see a monetary return by such recordings?
C.I.: No, I honestly don't see a monetary return. The value of a CD for me as a musician is on one hand emotional and on the other promotional. It is first a documentation of my work, something to hold in my hand, which delivers the music together with a nice artwork and tells a story. The economic value lies more in connection with the promotion, since I think a release on a physical carrier makes a band still more relevant for media and promoters.
Cadence: Just to clarify for all of the recordings you have done on Intakt even taking in account new digital formats and streaming services; you have never seen any kind of monetary reward from your music? What about also the idea of selling disc at your concerts also. I double down on this because it calls into the whole notion of the value of recording especially in light of your PILGRIM band being one of the most active groups in Europe?
C.I.: The income of physical and digital outcome on the market goes to the label until break even. The reward after that is peanuts. I do sell CDs on concerts not bad, but this goes back to the production, which is for most of the part supported out of public and private cultural funds and by people who are enthusiasts and work for a low income, such as the musicians, producers, etc. If you do the numbers without that support, there would be never a chance to be economic in therms of money.
The reward you get is the reputation and promotion on the other hand, which can create a momentum and helps to get gigs, where you can see monetary reward in turn.
For me it was never different, since I started. The place I am working in is the

Interview: Christoph Irniger

Photo credit © Gian Marco Castelberg

Photo credit © Frederic Laverriere

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interview: Christoph Irniger

Photo credit © Alex Kiausch

processes thru different stages of emotions, which is in fact where the power of this band lies. Since the setlist was built on the spot, you even notice sometimes musicians deciding differently, going different ways and finding each other again. There are doubts and questions, leading into resolution and common energy. The path is not always straight and needs rethinking or reflexion sometimes, but because of the trust, common idea and subordination of the ego of everyone, the music can develop always.
So it's more about how we play, then what we play. The main idea is to show how the band works and let the listener be part of the process, independent of the (but of course original) compositional material. So there was no intent in the choice of the content for the set. Of course we always played the 3 new songs on that tour. The rest was a spontaneous compilation out of standard repertoire of the band, mainly of newer compositions from a pool of about 20 pieces. So there are some of the main themes of „Ghost Cat" (Intakt Records, 2023) and the piece „Back in the Game", which came out first on „Italian Circus Story" (Intakt Rercords, 2014). There were also a lot of pieces from „Crosswinds" (Intakt Records, 2019) in the pool, but were not played that night.
Cadence: You have repeated some of the compositions from prior recordings on this disc; with the cost of buying music being so expensive what separates (makes this version of theses tunes) this release and this version of this music from their prior renditions and thus necessary to purchase?
C.I.: I think I answered the question partly already. Besides the main idea of letting the listener be part of the process in evolving a common energy, there was a very different intension when producing especially the „Ghost Cat" record. There we wanted really to keep the songs as songs, which you can listen at home, even as background. The improvs are not overbearing and the dynamic range is smaller. The stories are told in a straight way, from beginning to the end, with less of the surprising turning points you have at the gig. The choice of the compositional material had much more importance, than on the live recording.
And of course there is a huge tradition in Jazz to record different versions of a song. Monk played only around 70 compositions during his whole life I think?!
Cadence: Since your last interview with Cadence I imagine that you have been to the USA I wondered what your impressions are of our jazz scene; and some of the artists of note in your view?
C.I.: Jazz has become a global language over the years but of course, like for many others, the US and above all the New York jazz scene has been the main influence for me as a saxophone player. All of the saxophone players I was checking out probably had their center of life in New York at some point in their lives. So for me it was essential to stay in this city whenever I could when my life was a bit more flexible (without family, etc.). It's where a lot of the music is coming from and where the musicians carry the legacy. Playing with some of these cats, like Nasheet Waits, Loren Stillman or Ohad Talmor, listening

Interview: Christoph Irniger

Photo credit © Gian Marco Castelberg

to legends like Lee Konitz or Bill Frisell, institutions like Ari Hoenig Mondays at Smalls or Wayne Krantz Wednesdays at the 55 bar, were life changing events to me. And of course it's also just the incredible amount of great musicians from all over the world in this place. You can just play sessions every day on a high level. If you ask me about some artists of note, there are so many like Dayna Stephens, Loren Stillman, Steve Lehman, Mark Turner, Chris Speed, Kris Davis, Joel Ross, Walter Smith III, Immanuel Wilkins or Guillermo Klein.
What concerns me as composer, my vision or artist in general I think the influences are much broader and more based on contemporary art, sounds and experiences of life in general, not bound to a certain place.

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

C.I.: My writing is an ongoing process which starts in beeing open for anything all the time. I am constantly hunting and gathering and make notes and scratches, even if it seems to be nothing in the first moment - not only on a musical or/and technical level, but also in every aspect of what life in general gives you. This is often not even conscious or needs extra time, which is really important for the next phase, where I dive into these notes and try to organize them, take the time to define or decide which way to go, what should be said and what not. Of course I did study composition and constantly exercising it, like my instrument, since it is a muscle which can be worked on and make constant progress.
When it comes to bring it on paper, the main idea comes mostly from this pool. I guess I mostly start with a melody and later go into harmonies. There are even a lot of compositions, where I wrote only single lines, such as a melody and a bass line and no cords. My compositions are built mostly out of voice leading - inspired by Bach corals for example - where harmonies evolve out of different lines (voices) played together. So you have recognizable melodies and harmonical richness at the same time, which gives the improviser(s) more options to create worlds between relaxation and tension or openness and density.
This leads especially to an idea of Pilgrim for example, which is to have the possibility to create, design and shape within the musical context in any moment. The idea is to play a song or express an common idea, without being in a cage of a sacred form.
Of course this is a bit different in the orchestral context, where the composition is much more defined and detailed. But the process is the same: It all starts with melodies, sometimes several at the same time, which evolve or give ideas for a harmonical world. Of course there is also a lot of knowledge and constant learning involved, such as analyzing scores from both classical and jazz works, which gives the tools for orchestration, instrument theory, etc.

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

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

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

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

C.I.: It has always been a challenge to tour in the US, since it needs a lot of work and money to get a working visa. I was thinking about renewing my visa, but decided against it lately to wait and see how the music business develops. I love to tour abroad and playing in the US was one of my personal highlights, but it must be sustainable in terms of finances and the environment. That has nothing to do with an attitude and is also not affecting my music or my wishes to go back, especially to New York.
There are many musicians who are explicitly political, which is more than I can say for myself. I'm interested in society and working in a community, bringing people together, regardless of where on the world, their age, nationality, religion, political views, etc. I find it difficult to change the world at large. But in my environment, my neighborhood, my community or wherever I go with my music, with lovers of jazz, good music, culture and art in general, or simply people who are looking for exchange in some form, doing good and connecting people is within the scope of my possibilities by being a musician.

Book Look

THE LONG SHADOW OF THE LITTLE GIANT, THE LIFE, WORK AND LEGACY OF TUBBY HAYES,

SECOND EDITION
BY SIMON SPILLETT, 395 PAGES, EQUINOX PRESS.

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

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

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

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

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

Larry Hollis

Reissues

DAVID "FATHEAD" NEWMAN, RETURN TO THE WIDE OPEN SPACES,

STEADYBOY 0067.

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

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

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

Larry Hollis

New Issues

RICH PEARE, DON MESSINA
BLUES FOR PETER

NEW ARTISTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KAZZRIE JAXEN, DON MESSINA
THE DANCE

NEW ARTISTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bernie Koenig

New Issues

NICK HEMPTON/CORY WEEDS
HORNS LOCKED

CELLAR MUSIC 060124

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

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

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

MITCH TOWNE
REFUGE

CROSS TOWNE RECORDS1001

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

Towne, org; Tetsuya Nishlyama, g; Jeffery Johnson, d. 11/2024. Omaha, NE,

Organist Towne assembled his touring comrade for this introductory album of all self-penned numbers (except for track five from Kenny Kirkland eponymous Verve release).

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

CYRUS CHESTNUT
RHYTHM, MELODY AND HARMONY

HIGHNOTE 7359

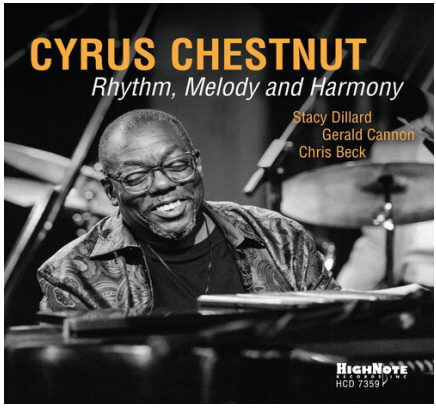
CURED AND SEASONED / AUTUMN LEAVES / AMI'S DANCE / PRELUDE FOR GEORGE / TWINKLE TOES / SONG FOR THE ANDES / BIG FEET / MOONLIGHT IN VERMONT / THERE IS A FOUNTAIN. 58:05.

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

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

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

Larry Hollis



JORDAN VANHEMERT, SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

ORIGIN 82921.
HERE AND NOW / TREAD LIGHTLY / MOURNING COMES AGAIN / SOFTY AS IN A MORNING SUNRISE / SEA OF TRANQUILITY / COME SUNDAY / MILYANG ARIRANG / MO'S BLUES / SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST. 57:57.
VanHemert, sax; Terell Stafford, tpt. flgh; Michael Dease, tbn; Helen Sung, p; Rodney Whitaker, b; Lewis Nash, d. 10/12/2024. East Lansing, MI.

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

Larry Hollis

New Issues

DANIEL GARBIN
RISING

6X20 RECORDS, TOUFETTE RECORDS
DOWNLOAD
RISING/ SIMI'S BOSSA/ ROLLING HILLS/ ANOMIOSERICORDO/ DSD/ ALMOST FORGOTTEN/ INTO THE SUNSET 49:51
Daniel Garbin, g sitar; Camila Cortina , p elec keys; Scott Litroff – as; Eddy Khaimovich electric and acoustic basses Brian Woodruff – d New York 2025
Looking forward to some sitar jazz. The opening track is nice and relaxed with great interplay between the sitar and alto. At first I thought I heard a voice but it was the combination of instruments. Everyone but the drummer gets to solo while Woodruff maintains an interesting rhythmic pattern on the snare. Garbin has a nice flowing style on guitar on Simi's Bossa. On this track the drums should have been a bit more present. Cortina plays some very nice chords and accompanies everyone very nicely. She even makes the electric keyboard sound good, and Khaimovich makes himself felt throughout. His solo on electric bass on Almost Forgotten is very nice. Over all this is a nice relaxed recording. The tunes are interesting, the solos all good and the players all work well together. My only two complaints are that I was hoping for more sitar and that the drums should have been a bit more present in the mix.

Bernie Koenig

GINETTA'S VENDETTA
FUN SIZE

GINETTA/ BLUES FOR POP/ THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU/ BLACK ORPHEUS/ TELL YOUR STORY WALKING/ MOON RIVER/ ALL BLUES/ LITTLE SUNFLOWER/ IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU/ MISTY/ CHRISTMASTIME/ GINETTA/ BLUES FOR POP POP/ THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU 82:31 DOWNLOAD
Ginetta M., Pocket Trp, Vocals,;Jon Davis-P, ; Danny Walsh -ts, ss; Marcello PellitterD;,Belden Bullock Bass.
The opening track is a standard type tune with a nice bluesy feel. Interesting solos by Ginetta, Ion and Danny. On Blues for Pop there is a nice little left hand drum break with bass accompaniment. Very tasty. And they also have a nice short interplay on There Will Never be Another You. The rest of the recording is a nice mix of standards and originals. One of the things I really like is when the melodies are played, they are not always in unison but the trumpet will state the melody with nice accompaniment by a sax. Great interplay. Both horn players are quite melodic. Every once in awhile Walsh sounds like an early Coltrane. And on All Blues Ginetta sounds a bit like Miles. Davis is also a nice player using chords effectively. I also really like the interplay between Pelitteri and Bullock. They really work well together. Pelitteri has a nice exchange of fours on It Could Happen to You. Overall this is a really nice record with some really good playing. The band works well together. Only one negative note. I could have done without the vocals.

PROSPER
JUSTIN CHART

UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

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

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

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

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

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

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

Richard Walker

Papatamus Redux

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

JAMES BRANDON LEWIS: ABSTRACTION IS DELIVERANCE, INTAKT

It's time for a "compare and contrast" essay, remember those? This time the topic is John Coltrane's 1963 Ballads and James Brandon Lewis' 2025 Abstraction is Deliverance. The similarities are uncanny. For starters, both recordings were the fifth session for each leader featuring quartets with which they had been working with for several years. By 1963, Coltrane, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones had established a musical rapport second to none. The same could be said for Lewis, pianist Aruan Ortiz, bassist Brad Jones and drummer Chad Taylor, who celebrate five years as a working quartet. with Abstraction is Deliverance. Then there is the mere sound of the leader — muscular, lyrical and expressive. Both players have a way of luring you into their musical journeys and enveloping you in their majestic sound. The major contrast between these recordings (one a classic and one destined to become a classic) is the repertoire, Whereas Coltrane chose eight standards from the Great American Songbook, Lewis wrote eight compelling ballads of various styles as well as performing Mal Waldron's "Left Alone." Although Lewis' ballads may lack the familiarity of Coltrane's selections, they are not lacking in emotional impact. You can sense that from the opening Coltrane-inspired vamp of "Ware," a piece Lewis dedicates to saxophonist David Ware, through more hypnotic prayer-like ballads such as "Even the Sparrow," "Per 7" and "Multicellular Beings." The folk like quality of the title track is infectious, especially with its classical sounding rondo at the end. There is a sense of bebop in the Monkish sounding "Mr. Crick," and a feel of chamber music in the delicate melody of "Polaris" which builds in intensity. The bowed bass of Jones and cascading notes of Oritz add a spiritual element to Waldron's "Left Alone." Throughout the nine tracks. Oritz, Jones and Taylor provide a cushion upon which Lewis can explore his ballads. At the same time, Lewis provides his bandmates with the freedom to express their own sense of majesty in their interactions and solos. So, in conclusion (because all "compare and contrast" essays have to end that way), like Coltrane's Ballads, Lewis' Abstraction is Deliverance is a must have for any serious jazz collection.

BOTTOM LINE: Every so often, a record grabs my attention from the start and manages to hold my interest with every note, beat and mood. James Brandon Lewis' Abstraction is Deliverance is one of them. Featuring eight beautifully written and majestically played ballads plus a moving version of Mal Waldron's "Left Alone, "Abstraction is Deliverance confirms Lewis' position as one of the top tenor players on the scene and his quartet as one of today's best working groups.

SANDRA-MAE LUX
SEASONS IN JAZZ
ECN MUSIC

Many jazz vocalists take songs from the Great American Songbook and make them their own. Not Sandra-Mae Lux. On her latest release, Seasons in Jazz, Lux performs 11 originals in the tradition of the Great American Songbook and owns them! With an uncomplicated, natural vocal style like Chris Connor or Anita O'Day, Lux's delivery is perfect for these tunes that tell a story and are filled with meaning. That is what Lux loves about the golden era of songwriting from the late 1920s to 1950s, and she has captured that feeling on Seasons in Jazz not only in style but in the names of the tunes. There are up-tempo swingers such as "Are We Having Fun Yet" and "It's Only Spring," ballads such as "When Autumn Calls" and "Everyone Else Knows," even a bossa nova titled "Perfect Weather." She caresses the heartfelt lyrics written by Alan Marriott with her warm and intimate voice. Lux crafted the mostly ABAA style compositions and arrangements for two separate trios. Many tunes provide pianists Bob Barron or Christian Vaughan with an opportunity to display their crisp and swinging styles. Guitarist Tristan Paxton is added on the medium swing "It's Only Spring." He also provides a sensitive counterpoint on the guitar/vocal duo "There's a Door." Lux adds her luscious tenor sax playing to "Love Me Tonight" and "Perfect Weather" and repeats the ballad "When Autumn Calls" as an instrumental. Take special note of "This December Love," a tune that will become a regular on my annual holiday radio show. While many contemporary vocalists have abandoned the style of the Great American Songbook for tunes reflective of the angst of their personal struggles, it's refreshing to hear a vocalist write and perform a set reflective of the beauty and heartfelt nature of the Great American Songbook. There is a phrase at the end of "It's Only Spring" that summaries how I feel about Lux — "Am I growing fonder of you?" After listening to Seasons in Jazz, you'll grow fonder of Lux as well.

BOTTOM LINE: With its disco and funk flavor, Sandra Mae Lux's freshman release, Happily Ever After was forgettable. She has redeemed herself with Seasons In Jazz, an unforgettable session featuring 11 original compositions inspired by the Great American Songbook. That means memorable melodies and heartfelt lyrics all delivered in an uncomplicated and natural style.

Papatamus Redux

TYLER HENDERSON: LOVE ENDURES
CELLAR MUSIC

I go to our local farmers' market for fresh, clean, crisp, flavorful and tasty fruits and vegetables. The freshman release from pianist Tyler Henderson has those same qualities. Having workshopped the material in New York's finest clubs, Henderson and his trio bring a fresh approach to the tried-and-true piano trio format on Love Endures. The sound of trio is crisp and clean. Henderson's playing in the higher registers is crystal clear as is drummer Hank Allen-Barfield's sensitive brush work and Caleb Tobocman's resonant bass playing. Kudos to the recording and engineering team for capturing the pure sound of this wonderful trio. Love Endures is packed with various flavors, including Henderson's favorite standards and five originals (which have the qualities to become standards as well). Avoiding the cliches of typical cocktail bar trios, the band's arrangements of the five standards on Love Endures keep your interest with their shifting rhythms and captivating solos. Henderson chose five of his favorite standards for this session — "On a Clear Day," "I'll Never Smile Again," "Get Out of Town," "The Good Life" and "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning" (performed as a piano solo). Henderson's originals are just as tasty. These include: the up tempo "West End Promenade, with its nod to Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare;" the slightly Latin, Cedar Walton inspired "Hazel and Cedar;" the tender balladry of "Why Are You Not Here;" the conversation of Henderson's right and left hand on the title track, "Love Endures;" and the strong backbeat and walking bass line of "The Architect." The music of the Tyler Henderson Trio is ripe for the picking, so if you're craving fresh, clean, crisp, flavorful and tasty piano jazz, you can't go wrong picking up Love Endures.

BOTTOM: Pianist Tyler Henderson did his homework before releasing Love Endures.
He crafted wonderful arrangements for five of his favorite standards and composed five equally wonderful originals, He choose the perfect bandmates — Caleb Tobocman on bass and Hank Allen-Barfield on drums. He workshopped the material in New York City's finest clubs. Now that his work is done, it's time for your assignment — sit back and enjoy the artistry and beauty of Love Endures.

RYAN TRUESDELL - SHADES OF SOUND
OUTSIDE IN MUSIC 2515

With the release of Shades of Sound, a new word needs to be added to the jazz lexicon — Gilophile. There is no better word to describe multi-Grammy award winning arranger Ryan Truesdell who is on a mission to unearth lost Gil Evans' arrangements as well as recast Evans' classic recordings. Shades of Sound, recorded live at the Jazz Standard in 2014, is Truesdell's third release that is rich in Evans' signature sound — the sophisticated brass colorations, the atmospheric compositions, the interplay between the ensemble and soloists and the unique way in which Evans provided soloists with lots of room to roam. Shades of Sound opens with "Spoonful," from Evans' 1964 Verve recording The Individualism of Gil Evans. Pianist Frank Kimbrough sets the mood for this masterpiece which features solos from trumpeter Mat Jordell, tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin and alto saxophonist Dave Pietro. Trombonist Ryan Keberle delivers the melancholy "The Ballad of the Sad Young Men" over the lush horns of the ensemble and Kimbrough's sensitive accompaniment. The other two familiar Evans' tunes on Shades of Sound include: "Barbara Song," with an expressive extended solo from McCaslin; and the up-tempo swinger "Buster's Last Stand," from Evans' days with the Claude Thornhill Band. Vocalist Wendy Giles joins the band for two other tunes dating back to the late 1940s — the swinging "I Had Someone Else Before I Met You" and the danceable ballad "It's the Sentimental Thing To Do." Giles also introduces us to "Laughing at Life," a tune written in 1957 that has never been recorded. "Neetie's Blues," another previously unknown Evans tune, features Marcus Rojas' tuba outlining the changes on which tenor saxophonist Tom Christensen, Kimbrough and drummer Lewis Nash demonstrate their blues' chops. Although he doesn't have a solo spotlight on Shades of Sound, kudos to guitarist Jame Chirillo for adding just the perfect touch of the Evans sound to the proceedings. In addition to remembering Gil Evans, Shades of Sound is a wonderful tribute to Frank Kimbrough who passed away in 2020. Only a true Gilophile can capture the beauty, swing, adventure and sophistication that Gil Evans brought to jazz, and that's just what Truesdell and his Gil Evans Project do on Shades of Sound.

BOTTOM: Between the release of Centennial in 2012 and Lines of Color in 2015, Ryan Truesdell and the Gil Evans project recorded a live set at the Jazz Showcase in 2014. According to Truesdell, "live recordings give the listener a sense of the magic that happens when the notes are lifted off the page by amazing musicians." Eleven years later you can experience that magic and the amazing musicians on this set of familiar and unfamiliar tunes associated with Gil Evans.

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GILLIAN MARGOT & GEOFFREY KEEZER
MARKEEZ RECORDS

The directions for this new release from vocalist Gillian Margot and pianist Geoffrey Keezer are hidden in the lyrics of Jimmy Rowles' "A Timeless Place (The Peacock)," one of ten tunes on this session — "Find a quiet place inside and listen." Listen to the purity of Margot's rich and smoky voice. Listen to the wonderfully witty accompaniment and inventive solos from Keezer. Partners in music since 2014 and in life since 2016, the two worked together on five tracks on Keezer's 2018 release On My Way to You, but surprisingly this is their first full session as a duo. They are the perfect match for this set — Margot caressing and manipulating the melodies while Keezer plays with the harmonies and rhythms of the tunes. Margot's uncomplicated, yet evocative approach is perfect for standards such as "Blame It on My Youth," "Day In, Day Out," "All My Tomorrows" and "Lush Life." She demonstrates her ability to reach high notes with her vocalese on Hermeto Pascoal's "Joyce (Viva o Rio de Janeiro)," which brings percussionist Rogerio Boccato into the mix. Chick Corea's "Eternal Child" also benefits from Margot's floating vocalese as well as the Latin American punch from Keezer. On "Thou Swell," Keezer's strong left hand bass lines are the perfect accompaniment for Margot's joyful scatting. The couple's take of "A Timeless Place" is simply that — timeless with Margot's lower sultry vocal and Keezer's sublime accompaniment and solo. Keezer admits that the standards hold up because there's a lot more happening harmonically and melodically than in most popular songs. Consequently, the less effective tunes on this session are the more contemporary ones — "The Greatest Story Ever Told," written by Keezer's mentor Donald Brown and Peter Gabriel's "Here Comes the Flood, performed with guitarist Peter Sprague. Despite those two tunes, my advice is to find a quiet place and listen to Gillian Margot and Geoffrey Keezer on their long overdue duo session.

BOTTOM LINE: Like a siren song, Gillian Margot's opening swoop on "Blame It on My Youth" lures you into this recording. Unlike a siren song, however, there is nothing dangerous about this session of pure joy and beauty performed by Margot and piano playing husband Geoffrey Keezer. The two are perfect for one another and perfect for this set of ten tunes of familiar and some unfamiliar melodies.

Papatamus Redux

ROELOFS, JANSSEN & BENNINK
RITE OF SPRING
ICP

Many musicians play Thelonius Monk compositions, but there are only a handful that have the chutzpah to play around with Monk compositions and get away with it! Bass clarinetist Joris Roelofs, pianist Guus Janssen and drummer Han Bennink do just that on Rite of Spring. A case in point is their version of Monk's "Epistrophy" which opens with Janssen quoting the familiar strains of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" (hence the name for this release). The deep tones of Roelofs' bass clarinet and the quirky rhythms of Bennink join Janssen who eventually lands on that tune's familiar melody. From that point on, the trio is off and running, exploring the harmonic and melodic charm of this Monk classic. "Rite of Spring" is also used to open Monk's "Jackie-ing." The group plays around with two other Monk tunes on Rite of Spring : "Evidence," with an edgy stride solo from Janssen; and "Four In One," with Roelofs and Janssen playing the twists and turns of the melody in unison. Even the non-Monk tunes — Janssen's "Telgang" and "Scharrel" sound Monkish. Another link to Monk is the trio's version of Juan Tizol and Duke Ellington's "Caravan," a tune Monk recorded on his 1955 Riverside date. This is the perfect vehicle for Bennink's shifting rhythms and the hypnotic tones of the bass clarinet. Other tunes included on this live performance recorded at De Roode Bioscoop in Amsterdam on March 16, 2025 include Roelofs' classical sounding "Prelude," an "in and out" Latin-infused version of Charles Trenet's "Le Mer" and a soothing relaxed version of Richard Rodgers' "Spring is Here." Roelofs, Janssen and Bennink have distilled the edginess, humor and reverence of the ICP Orchestra into this surprisingly versatile and adventuresome trio.

BOTTOM LINE: The cover design of Rite of Spring captures the music— it's playful, full of twists and turns and moves in various directions. What else would you expect from drummer Han Bennink (who designed the cover), pianist Guus Janssen and bass clarinetist Joris Roelofs?

FRANCK AMSALLEM: THE SUMMER KNOWS CONTINUO JAZZ

The Summer Knows is an album as soothing, warm and refreshing as the season it celebrates. For this, his 11th recording, pianist Frank Amsallem enlisted the musical support of bassist David Wong and drummer Kush Abedey. Like his first recording in 1991 with Gary Peacock and Bill Stewart, Amsallem continues to mine the groundbreaking feel of the classic Bill Evans Trio. The title track, which Evans recorded in 1975, is a case in point. Amsallem's impressionist opening piano solo paves the way for the intuitive harmonic and rhythmic interaction of the trio members. "La Chason d' Helene," another French movie theme, begins with Wong playing the melody over Amsallem's perfectly played countermelody. The roles change before the trio explores the musical contours of this slow and atmospheric ballad. Other familiar tunes on The Summer Knows include "Unforgettable" and "Blue Gardenia," both recorded by Nat King Cole, as well as a bossa nova version of "You Won't Forget Me" and "Morning Star" (a song I remember from Hubert Law's 1972 release on CTI Records). Less familiar is a Kurt Weill tune rarely done as an instrumental — "It Never Was You" — which the trio approaches in a serene and rhapsodic style. Amsallem also contributed three originals for the session — the boppish "Cotton Trails," the modal "Agrigento" and the bluesy "Discourse." Whatever Amsallem, Wong and Abadey tackle on The Summer Knows they do so collectively, compassionately and with great competence. No doubt about it, Amsallem picked the perfect bandmates and compositions for The Summer Knows, making it a recording you'll enjoy any season of the year. After all, Henry David Thoreau once said, "One must maintain a little bit of summer, even in the middle of winter."

BOTTOM LINE: In 1961, Bill Evans changed the trajectory of the piano trio with his performances at the Village Vanguard. Coincidentally, that was also the year pianist Franck Amsallem was born in French Algeria. Sixty-four years later, Amsallem, along with bassist David Wong and drummer Kush Abedy, captures the unique musical interplay of the Bill Evans Trio with The Summer Knows.

Papatamus Redux

PETE MCGUINNESS JAZZ ORCHESTRA
MIXED BAG
SUMMIT RECORDS 834

Pete McGuinness chose the title Mixed Bag to reflect the diverse musical styles represented on the latest outing from his jazz orchestra. True, the 11 selections range from up tempo swingers to bossa novas, ballads to more "outside" compositions. Despite the musical ground covered, there are some commonalities between the tunes — simple yet sophisticated arrangements and compelling and concise solos. What else would you expect from three-time Grammy-nominated bandleader/arranger/vocalist Pete McGuinness fronting a group of musicians whose resumes include stints with the likes of Maria Schneider, Woody Herman and Toshiko Akiyoshi? Things start off with a bang as drummer Scott Neumann kicks off Cole Porter's "From This Moment On," which features McGuinness' singing and scatting as well as a soulful alto solo from Dave Pietro. While tunes such as "Lilac Blues" and "The Sly Fox (in memory of Bill Holman)," both written by McGuinness, demonstrate the band's ability to swing and swing hard, two other McGuinnes originals — "The Dark Hours" and "Down the Rabbit Hole" take the band in a more modern direction. Trumpeter Chris Rogers and tenor saxophonist Tom Christensen solo over the Brazilian-inspired rhythms of Rogers' "Rebecca." McGuinness also rearranged three classics for Mixed Bag: "Body and Soul," featuring flugelhorn player Hollis "Bud" Burridge; "So in Love," taken as a bossa nova with the addition of Pete McCann on guitar and McGuinness' heartfelt vocals; Thelonius Monk's "Round Midnight," featuring baritone saxophonist Dave Riekenberg; and John Lewis' "Django" that evolves from a serene piano solo from Mike Holober to a surprising upbeat groove featuring an alto solo from Mark Phaneuf. The session concludes with Johnny Mandel's "Where Do You Start?" This is McGuinness' first foray into writing for a 16-piece string section. Thanks to his arranging skills, sensitive vocals and a piano solo from Bill Charlap, this might very well be the "start" of a new career for McGuinness. If you're shopping for wonderfully crafted arrangements, well-played solos and one of the strongest big band releases of the season, Pete McGuinness' Mixed Bag might very well be your bag!

BOTTOM LINE: UK Jazz News hailed The Pete McGuinness Jazz Orchestra as "a fleet of inspired and virtuosic soloists coupled with exemplary ensemble prowess." Mixed Bag
proves that statement to be true with a program of 11 tunes featuring various musical styles from up tempo swingers to bossa novas, ballads to more "outside" tunes. There are even some wonderful vocals from McGuinness himself!