THE INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF CREATIVE IMPROVISED MUSIC

cadence

VOLUME 52 NUMBER 2 APRIL MAY JUNE 2026

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

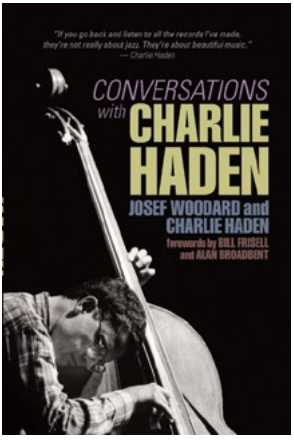
"Every once in a while, an album will come your way that both delights and impresses the ear. Like shooting stars, these are not completely rare occurrences, but it's the fortunate person who gets to enjoy the experience. If you are reading this while listening to Shawn Purcell's album "Oblivity," then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

WWW.ORIGINARTS.COM www.shawnpurcell.com

ORIGIN RECORDS

Conversations with Charlie Haden

by Josef Woodard and Charlie Haden



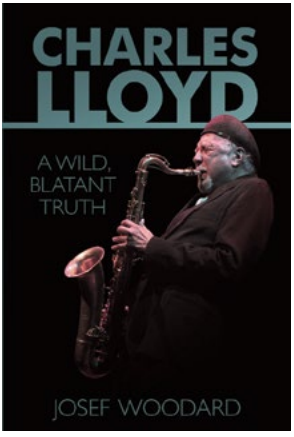
"Charlie Haden's story is a classic American saga, and Josef Woodard allows him to tell it eloquently and in moving detail," —Francis Davis

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

$19.95 256 pages, paper, illustrated

Charles Lloyd: A Wild and Brilliant Truth

by Josef Woodard



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

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

$18.95 240 pages, paper, illustrated

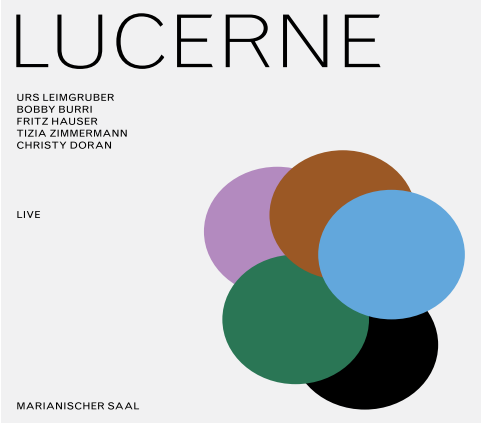
Published by Silman-James Press (www.silmanjamespress.com). Available now from all good bookstores, as well as Amazon.com.

Out now on Creative Works Records:

Urs Leimgruber, solo
Room 423

CD CW 1084

Leimgruber / Burri / Hauser / Zimmermann / Doran
LUCERNE



CD CW 1085

THELONIOUS **MONK**
BREMEN 1965

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

AVAILABLE ON DECEMBER 12
(2LP VINYL 180 g / 2CD DIGIPAK / DIGITAL)

sunnysiderecords.com

radiobremen

Sunnyside

"Intuitive, telepathic and forward-thinking, Inner Play further explores that connection between jazz and folkloric or world music influences, arriving at an organic whole that is invigorating, constantly surprising and spiritually refreshing." - Bill Milkowski

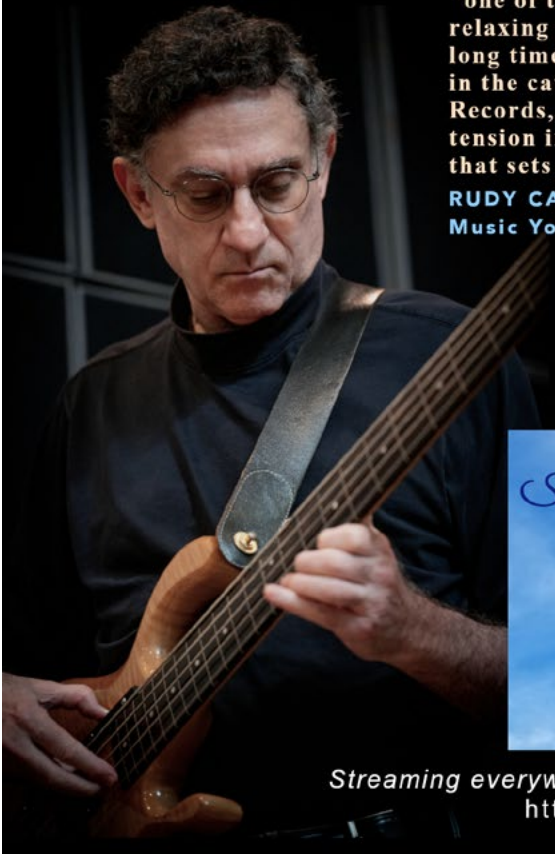
www.tomteasley.com

Dan Krimm

Latest album: SECOND WIND

"a fretless bassist, bandleader, and composer with a gift for honing singing melodic lines ... warm, sumptuous tone"
ANDREW GILBERT, Bay Area News Group (liner notes)

"plays with the limberness and timbral depth of an acoustic bassist ... harmonies are often pleasingly off the beaten path, ... while the melodies are always highly tuneful no matter how trickily they twist through those harmonies"
STEVE HOLTJE, The Big Takeover



"one of the most elegant and relaxing listens I've had in a long time ... would fit perfectly in the catalogs of ECM or Enja Records, but there's a unique tension in the bass and piano that sets it apart"
RUDY CARERRA,
Music You Need To Hear

Streaming everywhere, CDs available:
https://app.munb.com

Thanks Cadence!
Top 10 Critics Poll 2025:
Roland Kirk Quartet - Domino

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

mig made in germany

MOOSICUS RECORDS

www.mig-music.de
facebook.com/migmusic.de/


Gather
ALISTER SPENCE TRIO
Alister Spence
piano
Lloyd Swanton
double bass
Toby Hall
drums
www.alisterspence.bandcamp.com
ASM016
Alister Spence Music
'This is a great pianist at the peak of his powers –
an amazing album that richly repays repeated listening.'
Andy Hamilton, Jazz Journal
'Gather represents the Alister Spence Trio at their finest.'
Des Cowley, Rhythms Magazine

«ROGUEART»

ALREADY 20 YEARS…
and more to come!

JOSHUA ABRAMS • JEFF ALBERT • MARSHALL ALLEN • DAVID ARNER
ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO • HARRISON BANKHEAD • JACQUES
BISCEGLIA • MICHAEL BISIO • ANTHONY BRAXTON • ROB BROWN
JOHN BUTCHER • TAYLOR HO BYNUM • GERALD CLEAVER • JACQUES
COURSIL • SYLVIE COURVOISIER • CONNIE CROTHERS • STEVE
DALACHINSKY • ERNEST DAWKINS • BENOÎT DELBECQ • ROBERT
DICK • WHIT DICKEY • HAMID DRAKE • BENJAMIN DUBOC • PAUL
DUNMALL • MICHEL EDELIN • ORRIN EVANS • MALACHI FAVORS
MARK FELDMAN • SCOTT FIELDS • DENIS FOURNIER • FRED FRITH
TOMAS FUJIWARA • JOE GIARDULO • MARY HALVORSON • ALEXANDER
HAWKINS • JOHN HÉBERT • MARK HELIAS • NICOLAS HUMBERT
KIDD JORDAN • SYLVAIN KASSAP • PETER KOWALD • MIKE LADD
YUSEF LATEEF • INGRID LAUBROCK • DENIS LAVANT • DAUNIK
LAZRO • JOËLLE LÉANDRE • PEGGY LEE • THOMAS LEHN • GEORGE
LEWIS • DAVE LIEBMAN • FRED LONBERG-HOLM • RAMON LOPEZ
TONY MALABY • MAT MANERI • DENMAN MARONEY • MIYA MASAOKA
SABIR MATEEN • ROB MAZUREK • JOE McPHEE • FRANK MEDIONI
MYRA MELFORD • NICOLE MITCHELL • ROSCOE MITCHELL • JEMEEL
MOONDOC • JOE MORRIS • LARRY OCHS • EVAN PARKER • JEFF
PARKER • WILLIAM PARKER • STÉPHANE PAYEN • IVO PERELMAN
DIDIER PETIT • LAURENCE PETIT-JOUVET • ALEXANDRE PIERREPONT
MICHELE RABBIA • TOM RAINEY • TOMEKA REID • ERIC REVIS
ANGELICA SANCHEZ • BERNARD SANTACRUZ • SUSANA SANTOS
SILVA • DYLAN VAN DER SCHYFF • MATTHEW SHIPP • ALAN SILVA
CLAUDIA SOLAL • JUMA SULTAN • STEVE SWELL • CRAIG TABORN
CHAD TAYLOR • HANAH JON TAYLOR • CLAUDE TCHAMITCHIAN
NASHEET WAITS • SCOTT WALTON • DAVID WESSEL • NATE WOOLEY

**A huge thank you to each and every one of you,
brilliant musicians and artists, all of whom great human beings,
for entrusting us with your music.
«ROGUEART» is very grateful to you for making what it is today.**

www.roguart.com

A TIMELESS PLACE
YUNMI KANG & JOHN STOWELL

"Yunmi and John's performance takes us into an entirely different realm of expression—bending time, breaking away from it, painting sound in color and texture.
These elements are all qualities that John Stowell has mastered with his unconventional chord voicings and rhythmic freedom, while Yunmi colors each note with stunning phrasing and sensitivity."
Cadence Magazine (USA)

Two artists devoted to musical truth, engaged in an endless dialogue of empathy, freedom, and breath.

Recorded in Seoul.
Available on all digital platforms.

BIG round RECORDS

BIG ROUND RECORDS showcases boundary-pushing jazz, world, and genre-defying music, offering a home to artists expanding what sound can be. Part of PARMA Recordings, the label blends tradition with bold, forward-looking creativity.

THE ZAPPA HOUSE CONCERT captures a private 1996 performance by the **Meridian Arts Ensemble** at Frank Zappa's Los Angeles home. The MAE's work with Zappa marked a major turning point for the ensemble, now famous for its formal chamber recitals, rock and jazz club shows, private house concerts, and more.
bigroundrecords.com/catalog/br8998

Czech musician **Beata Hlavenková** defies categorization to the point that even classifying her as an "experimental" composer would be an insult to her work. Her latest album, **MONODIE 2.0**, is a highly idiosyncratic blend of jazz instrumentation, classical form and an existential levity usually only encountered in songwriting.
bigroundrecords.com/catalog/br8997

ONE GIANT LEAP reimagines the Voyager Golden Records through the artistry of **The Moanin' Frogs**, showcasing five selections from the originals alongside works they believe belong among the stars. Blending virtuosity, imagination, and stylistic range, the album highlights cultural diversity, shared humanity, and the ensemble's dynamic chemistry.
bigroundrecords.com/catalog/br8996

THE SINGING HORN from classical hornist and folk vocal artist **Mary Beth Orr** bridges the divide between opposites — folk and classical, raw and refined, life and loss. Anchored by heartfelt reflections on motherhood, love, and grief, **THE SINGING HORN** is an artistic testament to the bittersweet complexity of human experience.
bigroundrecords.com/catalog/br8992

Check out the whole catalog at bigroundrecords.com

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

Catch Bruce at Scullers in Boston on January 24, 2026.
Tickets
https://www.ticketweb.com/event/bruce-gertz-quintet-scullers-jazz-club-tickets/14735793?pl=scullers

SCAN ME

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

LOUIS ROSEN

AMERICAN SUNSET

Music and Lyrics by Louis Rosen

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

Piano: **Charity Wicks**
Acoustic Bass: **Pete Donovan**
Vibraphone & Drums: **Andy Blanco**
All Vocals, Acoustic Guitar and Arrangements: **Louis Rosen**

Producers: **Louis Rosen & Scott Lehrer**
Recording & Mixing Engineer: **Scott Lehrer**
Studio: **Second Story Sound**
Mastering Engineer: **Oscar Zambrano**, Zampol Productions
Art Design: **Nathan Golub**

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

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

BRILLIANT NEW WORK..

from Milton Marsh an artist you might remember from his classic Monism album for the Strata East label in the 70s; still sounding every bit as brilliant, all these many years later! The set has Milton still working in the larger, more ambitious ideas we love from his other records; a blending of spiritual jazz and additional string players, in a way that might be the closest approximation to the "black classical music" promised by Rahsaan Roland Kirk and others in the 70s! Yet Marsh is definitely his own visionary here, too carving out a sound that's as powerful as it is individual, with a unique sound that has us sitting up and taking notice all over again. Musicians on the recordings include David Eure on Violin, Stanton Davis on trumpet, Kevin Harris on piano, Carlos Averhoff on tenor, and Keala Kaumehi-wa on bass, with Marsh himself handling the Arrangements and Conducting his original compositions. Titles include: "Not Far From Home", "Great Expectations", "Dialogue", "Loving You", "By Design", "I Wonder Why I Care", and "Subtle Anomaly".

For Audio CD purchase with shipping and handling *
via Pay Pal send $14.99 payment to:
Alankara Records
192 Kennedy Drive, Suite 302
Malden, MA 02148-3408 U.S.A.
For Audio CD purchase with check or money order send
$14.99 payment with order form to:
Alankara Records
P. 0. Box 230635
Boston, MA 02123-0635 U.S.A.
*International shipping may cost a bit more if media mail is not available.

www.mmarsh.org

IRVING FLORES
AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ SEXTET

ARMANDO MI CONGA

TOP 10 ALBUM OF 2025
CRITIC'S POLL
CADENCE MAGAZINE

CELEBRATED BY INTERNATIONAL JAZZ CRITICS FOR ITS EXPLOSIVE ENERGY, DEEP CARIBBEAN ROOTS, AND MASTERFUL ARRANGEMENTS.

AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ SEXTET

IRVING FLORES, HORACIO 'EL NEGRO' HERNÁNDEZ, GIOVANNI HIDALGO, JOHN BENÍTEZ, BRIAN LYNCH, NORBERT STACHEL

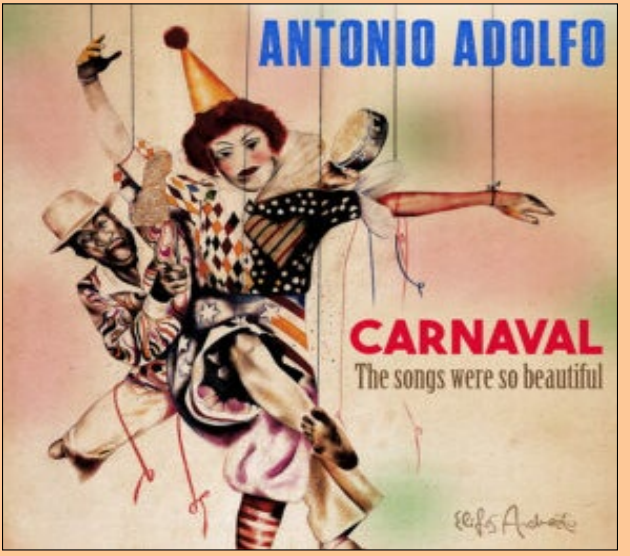
LISTEN NOW

AVAILABLE ON ALL PLATFORMS

CONTACT INFORMATION:

MANAGEMENT@IRVINGFLORES.COM.

+1 (619) 806-3331



ANTONIO ADOLFO

CARNAVAL

The songs were so beautiful

A Brazilian CARNAVAL (Carnival) reimagined by Antonio Adolfo and his Brazilian Jazz Octet.

antonioadolfo1.bandcamp.com

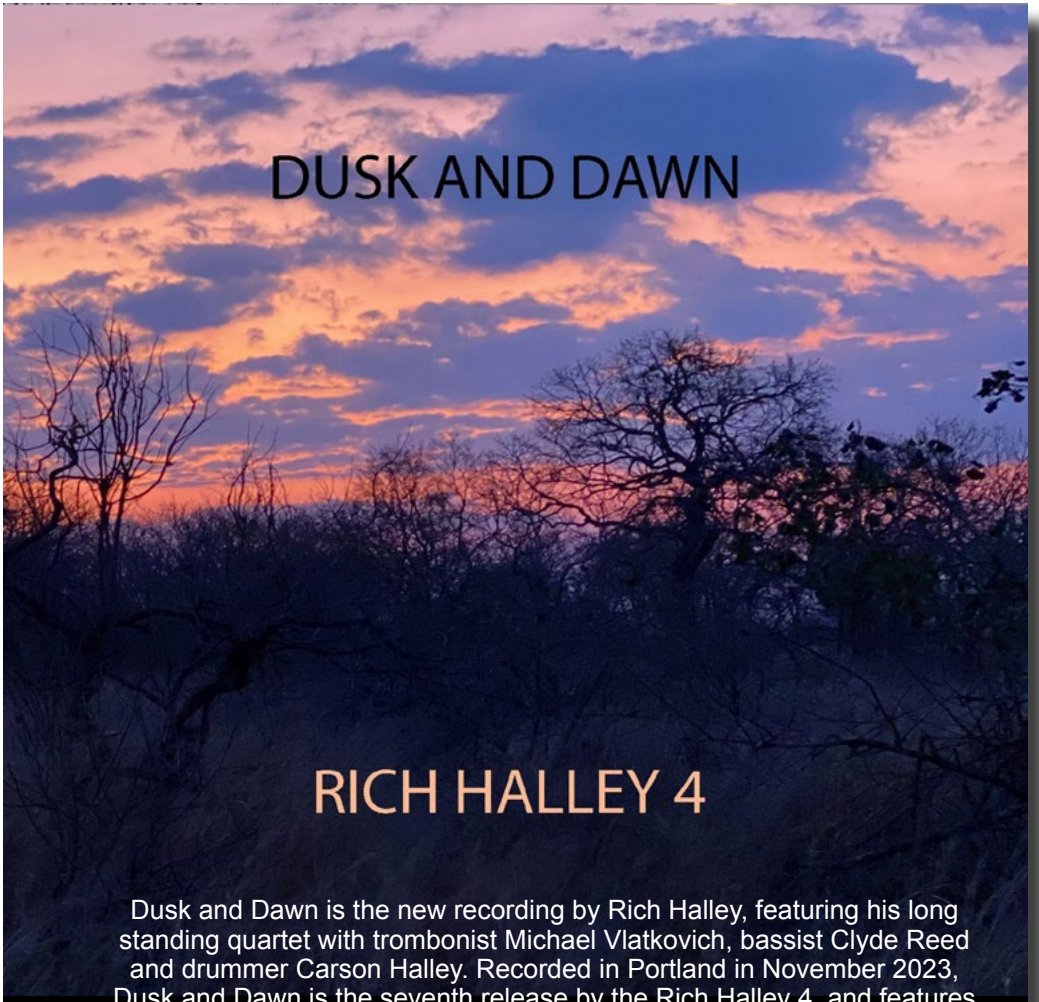
Some of the most beautiful Carnaval songs are presented by a group formed by Antonio Adolfo (piano and arrangements) which includes:

Lula Galvao– guitar
Jorge Helder – double bass
Rafael Barata – drums and percussion
Jesse Sadoc – trumpet and flugelhorn
Idriss Boudria – alto sax
Marcelo Martins – tenor sax and flute
Rafael Rocha – trombone
Andre Siqueira – percussion

AAM music

Arranged and produced by Antonio Adolfo

www.antonioadolfomusic.com
www.aammusic.com

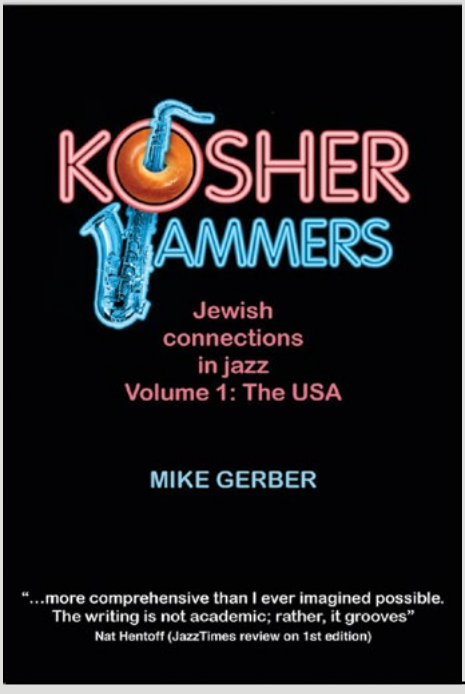


Dusk and Dawn is the new recording by Rich Halley, featuring his long standing quartet with trombonist Michael Vlatkovich, bassist Clyde Reed and drummer Carson Halley. Recorded in Portland in November 2023, Dusk and Dawn is the seventh release by the Rich Halley 4, and features a combination of Halley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



VINYL VANGUARD
Published by VINYL VANGUARD

KOSHER JAMMERS
Jewish connections in jazz
Volume 1: the USA
Mike Gerber

Pbk ISBN 9798224744800, 406 pages
ePub ISBN 9798223775706

To order see:
books2read.com/u/3LEG7M

Also sold at Housemans, Bookmarks, Ray's Jazz, Five Leaves, Vinyl Vanguard

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

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

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

"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

SLAM

Free jazz, contemporary jazz, and improvised music from UK label SLAM Productions. 250 albums available on CD & download from the likes of Julie Tippetts, Paul Dunmall, Max Roach, Mal Waldron, Steve Lacy, Daniel Carter, Lol Coxhill, Elton Dean, George Haslam and many others.

"SLAM was founded and operated by British baritone saxophonist George Haslam, and which in the last 25 years released some of the most fascinating avant-garde music recorded on the British Isles."
- Adam Baruch - The Soundtrack of My Life

slamproductions.bandcamp.com
linktr.ee/slam_productions

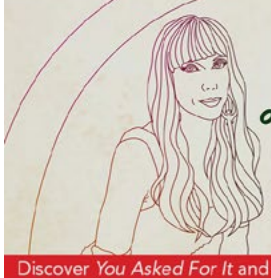

NeumaRecords.org
FOOD FOR THE MIND'S EAR

Once Upon A Time...

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

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

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



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

@Laura Ainsworth

Watch the video on YouTube

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

www.lauraainsworth.com

Jazz Records Wanted

Jazz record collector
looking for 10″ & 12″ LPs.
Will travel to inspect.
Many thanks and keep swingin'!

Photo credit ©Robert Hecht

Marty Greenman
P.O. Box 1169
Walpole NH 03608
(707) 704-1033
martygreenman1956@yahoo.com

Praise for Sonic Twist's last album "Cloudwalking"

"There is some magic spice going on here....enough to take us all on a magic carpet ride upwards and onwards."

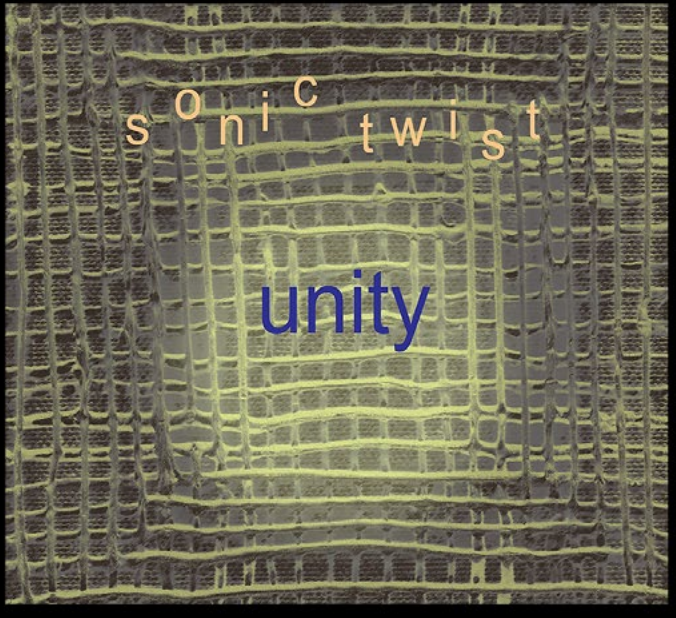
--Bruce Gallanter
Downtown Music Gallery

NEW FROM SONIC TWIST

SONIC TWIST® IS:

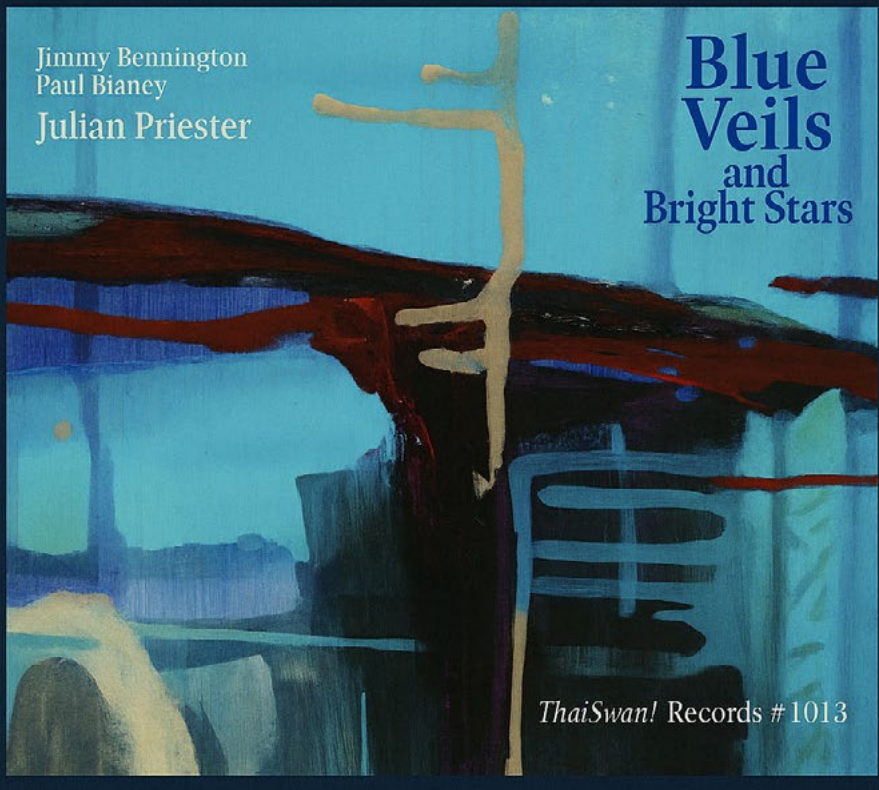
BRUCE ARNOLD
GUITAR

JUDI SILVANO
VOICE



VIDEOS AND AUDIO AVAILABLE ON ALL ONLINE PLATFORMS

VISIT US AT SONIC-TWIST.COM



From the deep archives, now heard for the first time 20 years later...

Featuring living legend Julian Priester

#BandCamp

www.jbcolourandsound.com

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

— Scott Yanow

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

— Jack Bowers

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

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

Perform these great Carroll DeCamp arrangements with your band

Purchase the album and sheet music at
maxfrankmusic.com

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

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

Bandcamp link:
https://artedmaiston.bandcamp.com/album/the-back-9

ALL SAXOPHONES HAND CRAFTED AND TESTED BY ENGINEERS.
THE NAME "GTSAX" WILL ALWAYS REPRESENT A GUARANTEE OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY."

WWW.OLDDOGNEWSAXOPHONES.COM

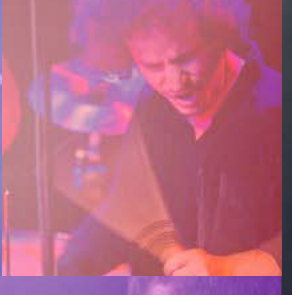


earshot JAZZ

SEATTLE'S NONPROFIT CREATIVE JAZZ ORGANIZATION

- Publications
- Memberships
- Education
- Artist Support
- One-of-a-kind concerts

earshot.org | 206.547.6763

All Photos by Daniel Sheehan

New Artists Records Releases

CDs and MP3 downloads are available through New Artists Records at http://newartistsrecords.com and on all the usual sites.

OUT NOW!

WWW.FLORIANARBENZ.BANDCAMP.COM

Vinyl/CD/Stream

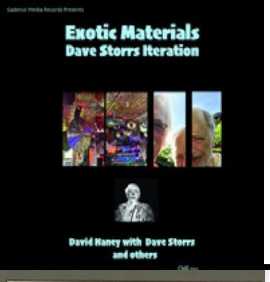
IN ASSOCIATION WITH JAZZFUEL PR

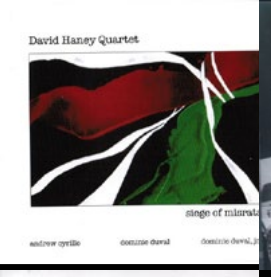
DAVID HANEY

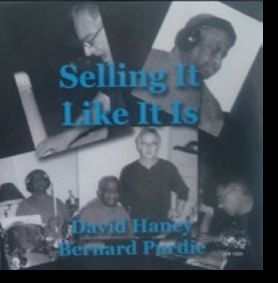
SELECTED RELEASES

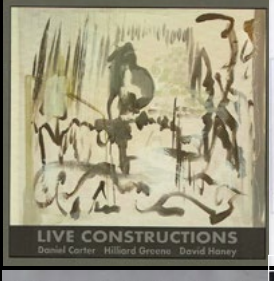
Featuring

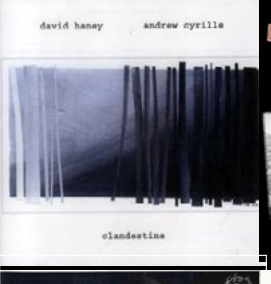
Andrew Cyrille; Buell Neidlinger; John Tchicai; Roswell Rudd; Roy Campbell; Bernard Purdie; Julian Priester; Han Bennink; Marvin Bugalu Smith; Gerry Hemmingway; Daniel Carter; Hilliard Greene; Adam Lane; Michael Bisio; Yael Acher

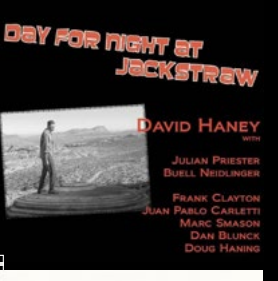


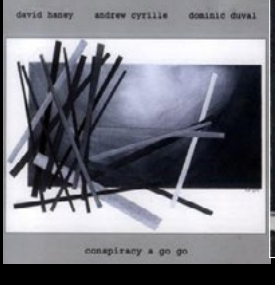


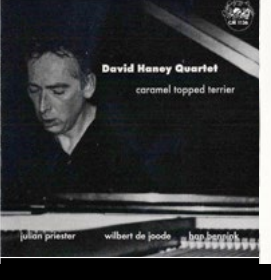


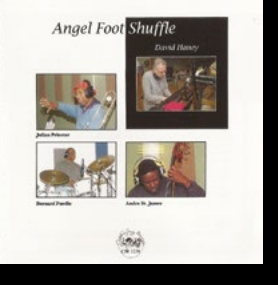










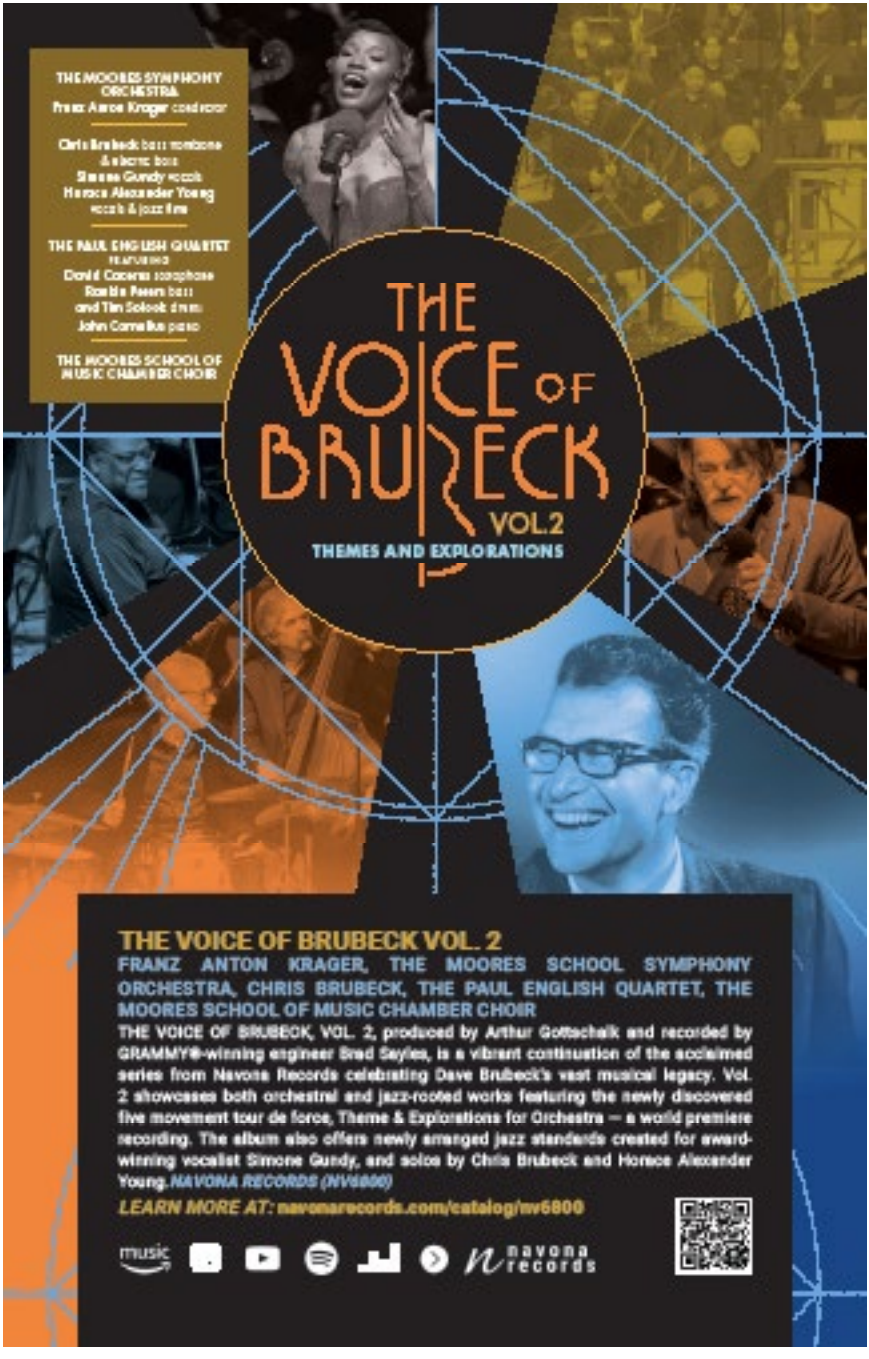


Order at

https://davidhaney1.bandcamp.com

https://cadnor.com/search?q=David+Haney

https://www.bigroundrecords.com/artists/david-haney/



THE VOICE OF BRUBECK VOL. 2

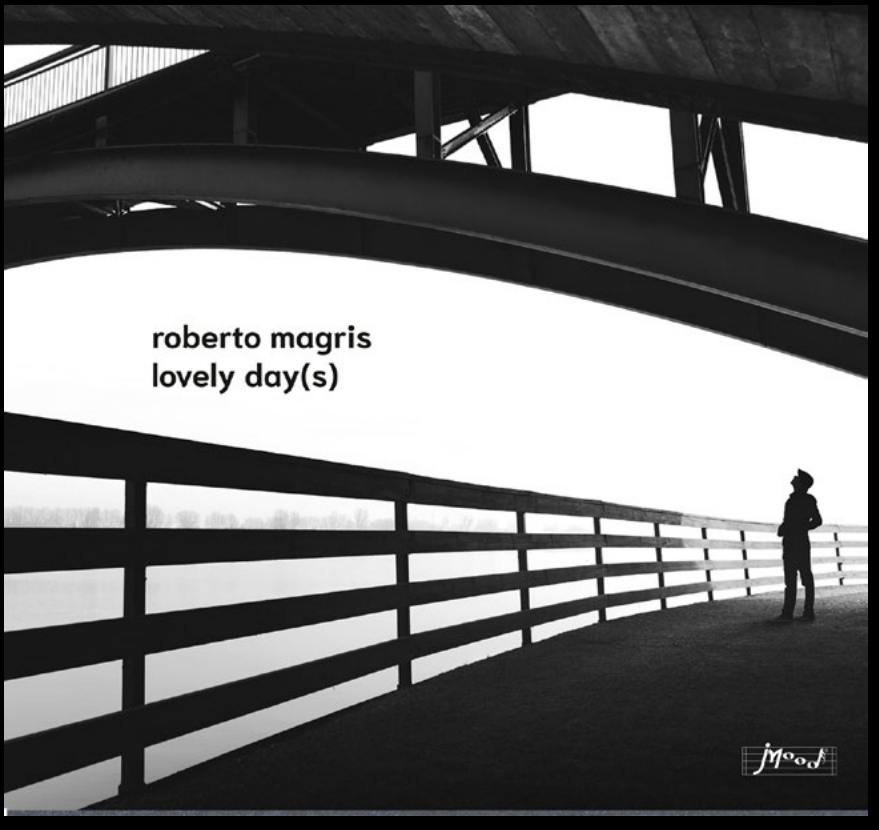
FRANZ ANTON KRAGER, THE MOORES SCHOOL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, CHRIS BRUBECK, THE PAUL ENGLISH QUARTET, THE MOORES SCHOOL OF MUSIC CHAMBER CHOIR

THE VOICE OF BRUBECK, VOL. 2, produced by Arthur Gottschalk and recorded by GRAMMY®-winning engineer Brad Seyles, is a vibrant continuation of the acclaimed series from Navona Records celebrating Dave Brubeck's vast musical legacy. Vol. 2 showcases both orchestral and jazz-rooted works featuring the newly discovered five movement tour de force, Theme & Explorations for Orchestra – a world premiere recording. The album also offers newly arranged jazz standards created for award-winning vocalist Simone Gundy, and solos by Chris Brubeck and Horace Alexander Young. *NAVONA RECORDS (NV6800)*

LEARN MORE AT: **navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6800**

navona records

Roberto Magris - Lovely Day(s)



After a career spanning more than four decades with concerts around the world and 40 albums to his credit, Roberto Magris presents "Lovely Day(s)", his first album of solo piano performances.

"A dazzling display of virtuosity and imagination... architectonic narratives that make you forget you're listening to "only" one musician... A reviewer once called Magris "One of the finest piano players on the planet", and there's plenty here to support that claim. – Neil Tesser"

Available at
www.jmoodrecords.com and
jmoodrecords.bandcamp.com

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

Contributors

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

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

LARRY HOLLIS (Album/Book Reviews) *is a vietnam vet, anti-social existentialist, retired tenorist, devout agnostic, nihilistic idealist & hard-bop grandpop. Secluded from societal mores he maintains a monastic lifestyle in his native Oklahoma.*

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

April May, June, 2026
Vol. 52 No. 2 (461)

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

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

Managing Editors:
David Haney, Colin Haney, Tana Keildh
Art Department: Alex Haney
Advisory Committee:
Colin Haney, Patrick Hinely, Nora McCarthy

ALL FOREIGN PAYMENTS: Visa, Mastercard, Pay Pal, and Discover accepted. POSTMASTER: Send address change to Cadence Magazine, P.O. Box 13071, Portland, OR 97213 Published by Cadence Media, L LC.

FRONT COVER
Clockwise from upper left

Naima Nefertari and Angel Bat Dawid
Sara Schoenbeck, Philip Greenlief and Jen Baker
Ricky Ford
Gary Burton and Ralph Towner
Marshall Allen and Kriston Osgood
Greg Abate
Ralph Towner

Inside This Issue

CADENCE MAGAZINE EDITORIAL POLICY

Establised 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 musicaians, 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."

SHORT TAKES

FEATURES

NEW ISSUES

PAPATAMUS REDUX
ALBUM AND BOOK REVIEWS FROM ABE GOLDSTIEN

Short Takes - Philadelphia

Philadelphia, PA: Penn Live Arts (University of Pennsylvania) presented a 1/24 double feature of bands led by emerging Jazz leaders Isaiah Collier and Keyon Harrold at the Zellerbach Theatre. Collier's quartet (Davis Whitfield, p; Way Campbell, b: Tim Regis, d) led off with a fiery set of music that was modern as well as footed in the realm of past masters. He's long had the spiritual pursuit of John Coltrane and the full-throated tone and endless questing energy of Sonny Rollins in his playing. A current day Pharoah Sanders. On this night, he was paying tribute to Coltrane (whom he proclaimed to be "our Beethoven"). A powerful take on "Naima" came first, opening with a bass solo. The quartet respectfully rendered the beautiful composition written for Coltrane's first wife and then eventually Collier's tenor playing increased in intensity as the song advanced. Collier, playing from his heart, rocked backwards for extra thrust when needed, especially on the tune's angular, blistering ending. He switched to soprano sax for "Afro Blue" and wowed listeners with a lengthy, serpentine circular breathing session, while making space for an impressive piano solo by Whitfield, a new name for me and certainly one to watch for future achievements. "Impressions" and "Mr. P.C." followed with no drop in expressionistic effort. Collier gave a shout out to Keyon Harrold – "A musical big brother of mine." He also had statements of concern for the current world situation - "This music is by the oppressed, for the oppressed," and "It's not easy, nobody said it was gonna be easy." Keyon Harrold, at age 45, is 18-years Collier's senior. Raised in Ferguson, Missouri and based in L.A., he's already worked with artists such as Keith Richards, Diana Ross, Beyoncé, Robert Glasper and Rihanna, rap icons Common, Jay-Z, Eminem and Nas, neo-soul greats Erykah Badu and D'Angelo, and has been Grammy nominated multiple times. He also famously played the trumpet parts for Don Cheadle's Miles Davis biopic, Miles Ahead. His set offered a contemporary/sensual Jazz angle rather than the soul-searching, heart-bearing Collier approach. That's not to say there was any drop in musicianship – Harrold is a true trumpet virtuoso who played with total control and a rich, emotive tone. Commencing with instrumentals "Melancholy Aura," "Commish B" and "Abandoned Heart," Harrold frequently crouched down to deliver robust swoops and swirls backed by his gifted quintet mates - Eric Worthem (p), Nir Felder (g), Dan Winshall (b) and Dominique Gervais (d). His original compositions percolated with glowing melodies that suggested a reflection of the leader's life - the recent loss of his mother and having to cope with a racially motivated assault on his teenage son. Early in his set, Harrold noted he was fresh off the plane from his west coast home and commented on the freezing local conditions and the approaching devastating east coast winter storm that was hours away. He, like Collier, had a lot to say about the current state of the world. He asked everyone to stand up for peace and equality. The second half of his set brought out vocalist Malaya Watson (eighth place finisher on the thirteenth season of American Idol), veering the music towards a R&B center. Sounding at times like a cross between Anita Baker and Beyoncé, she oddly wore a baggy olive-green hoodie and Beanie cap that shielded some of her face from view. Watson and Harrold took turns singing lyrics including "If I could be your Forever—If I could be your Foreverland. I'm waiting for answers, I got my hands up." The song bled into "Wayfaring Traveler" and then a pleasing tail of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit." "Grounded" merged with "Find Your Peace" and were clearly pieces that meant a lot to Harrold. Starting with a stark trumpet solo and a dramatic band

entrance, the leader sang as well as said, "Find your peace. Don't let nobody take your peace…We are all we got…It's time for us to stand up." Harrold frequently threw in musical quotes including a snippet of "Caravan" and a late gem of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" before completing the evening with the spiritually uplifting hymn-like chant of "Amen, amen, amen."…JeJaWeDa at 2223 Fish (Fire Museum Presents) on 2/14 wasn't interested in romance as much as highly combustible music and theatrics. The quartet, which first formed in 2019, comprises Dutch sound poet/vocal improviser Jaap Blonk along with Jeb Bishop (tbn), Damon Smith (b) and Weasel Walter (d) were on a short tour and playing together at a high level. Preset, Walter told me, "This band is really explosive, you won't fall asleep." As the set started and the soundman started to turn the lights down on the already dark stage, Walter wasn't having it – "Lights up! There's no vibe here – I don't want to get romantic, even on Valentine's Day!" Blonk had played the same venue 3 years ago, featuring original works, but this performance was fully improvised. He largely stayed seated behind his laptop, crafting sounds and unique vocalizations. He took center stage twice to concentrate on his sound manipulations, once wielding a video game controller he histrionically operated to produce more unusual sounds. He ended his last standing presentation by walking off and shaking as if electric shocks were tormenting him. Walter, who lived in Philadelphia for a minute, was at his restlessly entertaining best. Dressed in his trademark jodhpurs and riding boots, he once stood on his chair, climbed the wall, threw a large cymbal off stage (he later came off stage to play around with the cymbal while the band continued to play), and generally played the hell out of the drums. He, along with Blonk, appeared too large to be contained by the stage. Smith, based in St. Louis, was a constant booming presence. The bass looked small in his hands as he vibrantly coaxed pliant string plucks, grounding the chaos. Bishop employed an array of mutes and some electronics, balancing the group's antics as a straight man. Their set concluded on a high with the addition of Sandy Ewen, an experimental guitarist, visual artist and architect based in Brooklyn, who, according to Weasel Walter, is considered by Roscoe Mitchell to be the top experimental guitarist. Ewen's guitar work, which she plays sitting on her lap, is centered around found objects applied to her strings as well as her advanced extended techniques. Smith, always a charismatic hang and always vocal with his views on music creation, noted that he first played with Blonk in 1998 in Palermo, Italy. He said this quartet works so well together because, "All four people are super concerned with structure, although we don't know what's gonna be until we start." Smith, who has used artist Cy Twombly's work for cover art in the past said that he planned this gig in order to see the extensive Twombly collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art the next day. The night started with a local group - 52nd Street Planetary Ensemble (Ihba Baskette (as), Ryoko Ohara (as, perc), Sequoyah Leaf (cl, flt), Jason Das (cel), Ryan Ficano (b), Nate Totushek (d) – channeling their inner Sun Ra Jazz, Experimental and World music traditions with joyful creative freedom and atonality. Raw and lively, their music twisted and turned. At one point, Baskette jumped off stage and ran through the audience with his sax while adding some impressive high leg kicks. He announced, "We are from Earth – sometimes!"… Baltimore-based Todd Marcus is one of the rare Jazz artists to make a career out of playing bass clarinet but

that specialization has allowed him to reach the top pinnacle of performers on the instrument. He's also uniquely delved into his Egyptian roots – his dad is Egyptian- to work a fusion of a specific Middle Eastern music into some of his compositions. The Todd Marcus Jazz Orchestra played the Black Squirrel Club on 2/26 at the start of a 3-gig tour. Marcus was joined by Troy Roberts (ts), Justin Mendez (as, flt), Russell Kirk (as), Freddie Hendrix (tpt), Robert Edwards (tbn), Xavier Davis (p), Jeff Reed (b) and Eric Kennedy (d). Early in the performance, Marcus spoke about how much work was involved in bringing a large group together and about his other work running a nonprofit addressing poverty related issues in his Baltimore neighborhood – a community arts program for children and adults, a recovery program for women overcoming drug addiction, an urban farm and the renovation of abandoned buildings and vacant lots. Marcus noted that he was especially motivated after the death of Freddie Gray, the 25-year-old African American, who lived a couple blocks from him, died in police custody in 2015. He said, "As a musician, we try to take our pain and make a musical portrait." The music showcased Marcus' special talent for composing and arranging very personal music steeped in the tradition as well as the modern and his Egyptian heritage. Solos were equally ladled out with standout vein-popping sessions from Mendez and Roberts, and a mesmerizing couple from Hendrix. The first set ended with Temple University professor Bruce Barth invited up to man the piano and afterwards getting a big hug from Xavier Davis. The second set featured a lot of Marcus' wonderful Middle Eastern scales works. "Horus," named after the falcon-headed Egyptian god, referenced maqam music and began with Davis' dampened piano work. "The Hive" was explained, "To conjure up the images of Cairo and its beehive of activity and cars" careening haphazardly all over. "Cairo Street Ride" brought out more chaotic street life sounds and even tires rubbing across well-traveled roads. "Final Days" featured an impressive Marcus solo rich in its earthiness and dark tone, while "In the Valley" brought listeners, "A journey through the Valley of the Kings- capturing the majesty and the grandeur."… Oddly enough, the Cairo theme carried over to a performance at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 3/9. Hundreds of miles south of Cairo, in an area known as Nabta Playa, lies the world's oldest known stone circle. This ancient structure, thought to be an astronomical observatory, forms the basis for an exploratory collaboration between multi-instrumentalist Angel Bat Dawid and interdisciplinary artist Naima Nefertari (aka Karlsson) leading to a journey, diving from one sound world to the next, aided by a vast array of acoustic and electronic instruments. The Chicago-based Dawid and London-based Nefertari (daughter of Neneh Cherry) don't share a common zip code but do share a similar mindset for thoughtful music making. Their alliance fostered an aural blending of spiritual Jazz, celestial electronics, ancestral instrumentation, and storytelling to connect with our collective past as a means of moving forward ideally as part of a unified global community. Dawid, who stated that the music was a way to deal with the loss of loved ones, grew up with, "Singing pastors in the Black church," incorporates that emotional passion into her performances. Her website lists a personal statement - "My mission is to instill wonder in audiences while mentoring the next generation, ensuring that our music cultivates not just personal expression but also transformative social consciousness." The performance started with a slow build – a processional entrance through the

audience to the stage and then small instrumentation to summon the ancestors. Moving fluidly across clarinet, vocals, electronics, flutes, bells, auxiliary instruments, piano, Korg, mouth harp, vibraphone, kalimba, Hammond B3 Organ and keyboards, the music was in flux – there was even a lively segment where Dawid summoned everyone to their feet and led a Hip-Hop DJ session. Nefertari primarily played piano and keyboards in front of a beautiful floral tapestry fashioned by her late grandmother, Moki Cherry. Towards set's end, the duo invited harpist Cassie Watson Francillon to the stage as a surprise addition. A new name for me, Francillon, who gigs with Val Jeanty as a duo, fit in perfectly. Playing her small harp, she found her spaces to add color and helped expand the group vibrations with her unusual extended technique. The morning prior to their performance, Dawid and Nefertari participated in a listening session hosted by moderator Marcus J. Moore at The Fabric Workshop and Museum which held the Moki Cherry exhibit. Nefertari shed some light on her famous textile-pioneering grandmother – "The first gift from her mother was a pair of scissors… She didn't spend time with [other] children – she liked the forest…We are not in charge here. Her work was not about the real world- it was about imagining creatures…She studied to be a fabric designer and then she met Don [Cherry] and she knew it was going to be a nomadic life for her and that was [not conducive to being a fabric designer] so she made multimedia art. She pushed boundaries as an artist just as Don did as a musician…She struggled to be accepted as an artist – people didn't think what she was doing was art – they thought it was secondary to what Don was doing. After the session, Francillon introduced herself to the duo as she held her encased harp and explained she was in the area up from her home in New Orleans. A spontaneous sisterhood occurred and Dawid insistently said, "You came all the way from New Orleans, you've got to play with us tomorrow!"…

A 3/12 triple header at Pageant: Soloveev (Fire Museum Presents) featured the rare time that all 3 performances thrilled. The first gem was Barbedwire, a trio led by saxophonist Philip Greenlief (who has moved from the west coast to Maine), along with bassoonist Sara Schoenbeck and trombonist Jen Baker. Greenlief explained at the start- "The group is not called Barbedwire, the pieces are named that because on paper they look like barbed wire...I wrote these pieces in 2015 when I was looking to do different music. I wrote all 37 compositions in one night." Each performer used graphic scores drawn on large pages of white paper. Each score was drawn with lines often running in circular patterns with frequent stitch-like slashes intersecting with the lines. The breaks or stitches in the lines indicated what the composer termed as "musical accidents" which instructed the players to "change your musical behavior." Before playing, Greenlief asked, "Should we tune?" Schoenbeck answered, "No," and Greenlief agreed, "Okay, live dangerously!" The timed pieces varied in intensity, and the unusual combo of bassoon, trombone and tenor sax/Bb clarinet made the structured improvised pieces all the more exciting. Occasional humor was a bonus, especially in the last piece where Greenlief led off with laughs through his sax, soon to be musically mirrored by his bandmates. He also commented on his living relocation - "There's people here; I'm not used to playing in front of people. In Maine, it's me and the crows!" Next up was Li-Chin Li, a noted Taiwanese sheng (a Chinese mouth-blown polyphonic free reed instrument consisting of vertical pipes). She played a sheng with 32 pipes for a solo piece and then

participated in a surprise duo set with drummer Toshi Makihara on a smaller sheng version. With technique straying from the tradition, the petite Li fostered an army of unusual sounds from her instruments while rocking back and forth. Makihara added a new dimension to her presentation - hyperkinetic percussion with drum pounding, hand claps and demonstrative body postures which drove Li to more explorative spaces. At one point, Makihara overturned his floor tom drum and bounced a ball off it. Makihara also appeared with the last set of the night - The Lepidopterans. Described as a "supergroup" with Baltimore/ Philadelphia long-time experimental scene players Toshi Makihara (d), Tom Borax (self-built analog synth), Jason Willett (elec) and John Dierker (ts, b cl), Borax shed light on the band's name. "The name is after the class of butterflies and moths. I've been very interested in moths since I saw the Mothra movies with Godzilla." Mothra was big and scary, as was the performance of this quartet. The always animated Makihara had his hands full with required highly propulsive drumming which limited his typical physical antics but Borax more than made up for that loss with very physical body shaking while standing up to operate his synth and utilizing tap-dancing to add loud accents off the wooden stage. He was hilarious, hoofing on and off stage, at times disappearing behind the rear of the stage and then suddenly shooting out for more animated tapping. At one point he was gone for a bit - he climbed to the second floor above the stage and was tapping overhead of the audience but unfortunately, we could not hear it. Dierker sat and delivered massive sounds from his horns. At times, it seemed he'd burst his forehead vein if he'd blown any harder. Willett was content to play in the back under the veil of darkness, working his magic on electronics and a small organ device. The music wasn't jarring – it was engaging, odd, humorous, dangerous and theatrical. Cool stuff…Danish drummer Kreston Osgood, who's recording history with Jazz giants reads like a Jazz history book [Paul Bley, Yusef Lateef, Ran Blake, Dr Lonnie Smith, Sam Rivers, John Tchicai, Jerome Cooper and Wadada Leo Smith] was in the States for 8 nights and had two performances in town. He was at the Black Squirrel Club on 3/17 with Gabriel Meyer (tbn, tpt, as), Caleb Wheeler-Curtis (stritch, tpt, ss, sop) and Eli Pace (b).The playful Dane had fun at the venue with its odd collection of antique memorabilia hanging up all over the place. At one point he picked up a fluorescent orange foam life preserver and put it around his neck and announced, "It's great to be in Philadelphia, the greatest city in the world – right behind Copenhagen!" Later, he commented on the group's lack of banter with the audience – "Does it make you uncomfortable that we are not talking more?" The quartet stood out for its constantly shifting array of brass. Meyer and Wheeler-Curtis busily moved through their arsenals while Osgood displayed his pliant percussive skills. Wheeler-Curtis is one of a handful of players who've adopted the stritch as their primary horn. He was a young fan of the music of Rahsaan Roland Kirk and he uses the same model horn as Kirk. Playing the stritch is freeing for him. "It gives me a memory of music before I studied it. It feels pure, there's a freedom feeling in playing it because it's not attached to [the restrictions] I learned in school." The music - melodic and driving - came without the top blown off. A late Rock song surprised listeners and they scored high with a cover of Nirvana's "Blew." Osgood drew laughs while imitating the classic Rock drummer's drum stick hand twirl and at set's end, he got a drum solo to show off his skills. He classily chose to skip a muscular display to concentrate on

his shimmering touch. An opening set by FFMMAP (Aaron Pond (multi-inst), Mason McAvoy (tbn, flt, vcl) and Flandrew Fleisnberg (perc) in the venue's back room was wild and raw. Pond, a true spirit, never holds punches and combines Classical training with shape-shifting unorthodoxy. McAvoy, who also sang and recited poetry, said pre-set that she was new to the trombone and that she was playing her father's horn. Fleisnberg spun numerous brass plates on the ground to manufacture random sound and also spent time at the drums…The Black Squirrel performance was a prelude to Osgood's main event the next night at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) with Philly royalty – Marshall Allen (as, EWI, Casio), Dave Burrell (p) and Bobby Zankel (as). Osgood had never met Burrell before and Burrell was only too stoked to have the drummer tell the audience how they met – "Kreston, tell everyone how we met!" "We met on the internet!" The playful Burrell next turned his mischievous attention to Allen and his sequined hat. "I tried to take his cap but he wouldn't let me!" Zankel was also very surprised to get the call as he had never had contact with Osgood in the past either but Osgood obviously gets what he wants and he wanted the chance to play with the three local heavies. Any words used to describe Allen's ability to play at such a high level at age 101 (2 months away from 102) pale in comparison to the magnitude of his playing. The pile up of years have stripped away some of his time spent blowing hard through his alto, leading to more time spent on EWI, but he's still fierce. Allen and Burrell are throwbacks to the Fire Music era and, along with Zankel, who trained for long years under Cecil Taylor, approach music by giving into spirit, letting the music come through them. Burrell announced that he was 80, but got corrected by his wife, Swedish writer and librettist Monika Larsson, who sat in the front row. "You're 85," she yelled. She also had advice for her husband who was on a roll, talking from the stage – "It's enough!" Once the performance started, Burrell had to find his spots to enter into the aggressive horn play of Allen and Zankel, as well as the frequent cosmic swirls delivered from Allen's EWI. Zankel was excellent in unloading questing lines that led to peaks. His late quote of "Baby It's Cold Outside" was a welcome refresher from the boiler room heat. Osgood was marvelous in crafting solid and clever beats to match the evolving situations and meld them into a unified sonic imprint. He's fun to watch with his dramatic postures and the pure joy on his face when looking out at his new bandmates. After over an hour of playing, the music halted and Osgood stood up to say, "I think we should stop." He had merch to sell and he had been warned the day before that Allen was never done playing. True to form, Allen picked up his EWI and started playing, leading Osgood to surrender – "What am I talking about?" That's when things picked up and another 35-40 minutes ensued. Burrell and Osgood had a beautiful duet and then Zankel led a Blues segment that was taken out into space by Allen's EWI. Burrell prodded Osgood to lead with a funky beat that veered the band into a very catchy melody. Post-set, Osgood would tell me that he didn't want to play the funk beat but Burrell kept prodding him to do so and it worked out well. He explained – "The first rule is you don't play funky!" Finally, about 30 minutes into the extra portion, Osgood had had his fill of playing. He stood up and started a slow, nimble dance, twisting his body and arms, making his way to the front of the stage. Wearing a Green Goblin T-shirt, he resembled a giant green pixie with his animated, spry movements expressing his joy for the music. At this

point, Monika Larsson, whispered – "It's a little Patricia Nicholson up there!" [For those who've been to NYC's Vision Festival, you'll recognize Nicholson as the event's organizer and frequent performing interpretive dancer] It was a treat to see him dance so freely and a bold statement on Osgood's advanced unselfconscious creativity. Many Europeans harbor insecurities when playing in the States but here he was dancing amongst legendary American masters of the music with no holding back. What a beautiful statement of where music can take us. He ultimately sat down to listen at the foot of Allen, next to Zankel who also was sitting out at this point. Burrell finally had free room to dig into his bag and played a knotty rendition of "How Deep is the Ocean." He paused after finishing, and it seemed that might be the end but, nope, he and Allen picked up again, causing Zankel to crack a smile, a shake of the head from Osgood, and laughter from the audience. Finally, it came to an end and Osgood announced, "This was a wonderful learning experience." He said he doesn't dance often on stage but, "I was so inspired."

Ken Weiss

Isaiah Collier and Way Campbell at Zellerbach Theatre [Penn Live Arts] on 1/24
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Keyon Harrold and Dan Winshall at Zellerbach Theatre [Penn Live Arts] on 1/24
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Jaap Blonk and Jeb Bishop at 2223 Fish (Fire Museum Presents) on 2/14
Nova Workshop) on 10/10 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

The Todd Marcus Jazz Orchestra at Black Squirrel Club on 2/26
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia

Naima Nefertari and Angel Bat Dawid at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 3/9
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Barbedwire- Sara Schoenbeck, Philip Greenlief and Jen Baker at Pageant: Soloveev (Fire Museum Presents) on 3/12

Toshi Makihara and Li-Chin Li at Pageant: Soloveev (Fire Museum Presents) on 3/1
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Kreston Osgood at the Black Squirrel Club on 3/17

Kreston Osgood and Marshall Allen at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 3/18

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Ralph Towner warming up for rehearsal, recording sessions for Oregon's In Stride album, New York University, NYC, February 3, 2010. © Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®

RALPH TOWNER - A Farewell Salute

Born March 1, 1940, in Chehalis, Washington, died January 18, 2026, in Rome.

Ralph Towner was a uniquely adventurous explorer on his chosen instrument. No one had ever made a mere 12 strings sing quite like that before, nor 6, for that matter. He championed his acoustic instrument in an age of what his longest-standing musical colleague Glen Moore termed electrocity. His innovation was a very personal adaptation of the piano to the guitar. He was also a knowledgeable and engaging pianist, limited only by the fingernails he had to maintain for playing his guitars. Also a well-read quick wit, co-founder of the quartet Oregon and that band's most prolific tunesmith throughout its 48-year lifespan, as well as a 50-year ECM recording artist on his own. Any pantheon of musicians without him is incomplete.

Much of Towner's career has been well-documented in numerous tributes and obituaries which have appeared since his death, including:
John Fordham, in The Guardian, did the best, despite being 10 years off on Towner's birth year for the first edition, the error being corrected by the next day. https://www.theguardian.com/music/2026/feb/07/ralph-towner-obituary
The unattributed obituary on the ECM Records site is quite well done and was posted in a timely fashion. Not surprisingly, it focuses on Towner's work for that label, which comprises more than 50 albums, but also offers some other thoughtful insights. https://ecmrecords.com/ralph-towner-1940-2026/
Hank Shteamer, in The New York Times, omitted a couple of pertinent details, but they were only details, the overall report being otherwise accurate and comprehensive.https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/18/arts/ralph-towner-dead.html
Downbeat was most timely among US jazz publications to post an obituary, but their account was riddled with inaccuracies which have yet to be corrected. https://downbeat.com/news/detail/in-memoriam-ralph-towner-19402026
JazzTimes, as of 3/30/26, has yet to mention Towner since updating an older story about him in 2024. https://www.jazztimes.com
None of those dwells on his formative years, nor has much been said about some relevant if off-beat facets of his career, so I will.Unless otherwise noted, all recordings mentioned are on the ECM label.

One of five children, he looks to have begun writing his own script early on, a child precocious enough that, sitting in the back of the classroom where his widowed mother, a church organist, was teaching piano, he stubbornly just listened, already having mastered the lesson at hand, preferring to improvise instead, hankering to explore the unknown and make up his own tunes. Prior to enrolling at the University of Oregon, he also played piano for dance and rock bands, and trumpet in dixieland, swing and polka bands. He was no stranger to the stage or bandstand.

As a freshman at the University of Oregon, he participated in the Parents' Weekend Combo Contest, early in 1960, meeting and quickly bonding with bassist Glen Moore, the both of them sharing a fascination with what Bill Evans and Scott LaFaro were doing on the east coast, via their albums from the Village Vanguard. Theirs was an association which would last for 55 years. Both graduated in 1963.

Brett Campbell wrote an informative and engaging piece about those days for Oregon Artswatch www.orartswatch.org/ralph-towner-nancy-king-and-glenn-moores-oregon-musical-origins/:

By the time of a telling 13-minute clip from a mid-60s local morning show on a Seattle TV station, (youtube.com/watch?v=NDwKvqyROM8), Towner is already comfortably fluent on both classical guitar and piano, doing the things he would continue to refine and perfect for another 60 years. Not encountering it until this posthumous remove, it verges on the surreal: a tuxedoed, clean-cut young man on piano and, complete with footpedal, classical guitar, and already doing that thing with his tongue when he gets deeply involved in playing, looking like a kid shooting marbles. He's seated behind Tammy Burdett, an upright- bass-playing singer, and both are in the employ and ensemble of drummer and clarinetist Chuck Mahaffay (whose previous guitarist had been Larry Cornell) seen here on KOMO's Buddy Webber Show.

The repertoire is primarily Bossa nova, and Towner's familiarity with Brazilian music is convincing, his nimble guitar style already weaving the filigree which would become a trademark. His piano playing more often evokes the exuberance of Wynton Kelly than the brooding of Bill Evans yet, more than anything else, when given the chance, he sounds most like himself. Not to say he was already completely formed, but he was well on his way.

Near the end of the sixties, having relocated to New York City, mostly surviving early on with piano gigs passed along by Chick Corea, among others, Towner was invited to join the still-developing next roster of Paul Winter's Consort. The leader put a brand new Guild 12-string guitar into his hands, the first he'd ever played, and encouraged him to write some tunes for it. Did he ever.

Among Towner's first batch was "Icarus", which has now been Winter's theme song for more than 50 years, as well as being the lead-off tune on both the Consort's 1970 live album Road, Towner's first with the band, and its successor, entitled - wait for it - Icarus (Epic). He wrote nearly half the tunes on Road, more than anyone else, and the same was true of Icarus. On A&M's 1978 anthology of Winter's three albums for the label, Earthdance, more than half the tunes are Towner's, even though he only played only on the third and final source album.

Consort cellist David Darling's brother-in-law worked for NASA, and managed to hip the Apollo 15 crew to the Road album, which must have sounded like the right stuff to them, because they took it with them to the moon (in what format I could not say) and named craters there for Towner's tunes "Icarus" and "Ghost Beads". Winter has never hired another full-time guitarist since.

Photo Credit - Slick Lawson

ROAD, The Winter Consort, A&M SP 4258
personnel: Paul Winter, saxophone, Ralph Towner, guitar, Glen Moore, bass, David Darling, cello, Paul McCandless, oboe and English horn, and Collin Walcott, percussionist extraordinaire.

ROAD was, more than any other, the album which opened my ears to jazz, freeing me to see beyond the rock of the day I was already immersed in as a college student in the early 1970s. It is every bit as daring and seminal as Miles Davis' In a Silent Way, a touchstone, following what came before and extending into new territories in open-ended ways offering multiple paths forward for growth and exploration, as well as being a powerful and deliberate statement in and of itself.

A joyously unfettered spirit of mutual discovery permeates the proceedings. It has intensity without being noisy. All six players move freely, their individual threads weaving together into a rich tapestry defying categorization, embodying elements of jazz, classical, folk and Brazilian music, a fully functional ensemble operating at an elevated level from start to finish.

Towner's 4 tunes are all versatile vehicles, with the lead-off "Icarus" having the catchiest hook and much room for improvisation, of which Moore takes great advantage. "Ghost Beads" follows, emerging as the third part of a medley opening with Towner's arrangement of a 16th-century "Fantasy" by Alonso Mudarra, with a Winter and McCandless arrangement of a Bach fugue in between. All of which segues seamlessly into the Brazilian-inflected "Um Abrace". "General Pudson's Entrance" opens side 2, with a delightfully eccentric Towner solo intro which sets the stage for the whole band to dance and prance.

Throughout the entire album, the intercommunication within the band has moments of the veritable telepathy which would become a hallmark of Oregon. Winter wisely enabled these collective explorations. This early work informs all that follows. You can hear Oregon gleefully incubating.

ROAD is not only musically exceptional, alas: it is also exceptional in being one of very few vintage albums to be truncated rather than augmented with previously-unissued tracks in the conversion from LP to CD format. So, caveat emptor: Though the original LP is likely available to listen to somewhere out there on the web (isn't everything?), if you prefer to possess this album in physical form, I recommend the authentic, 1970 vintage LP, not any of the more recent reissues, because only the original includes all 8:10 of side 2's closer "Africanus Brasileiras Americanus". Later LP editions and the only known CD version crudely carve out as much as 2:09, totally destroying the flow of the piece, which, in its entirety, is an appropriately triumphant, uplifting finale to a rather perfect album. How one can call such butchery 'editing' beggars the imagination.

You can hear Oregon approaching collective escape velocity on Road, and during summer, 1970, following the tour that yielded those performances, they would fully hatch, and enjoy a residency long enough to record an album's worth of music at Cyrus Faryar's Increase Farm, a now long-gone creative commune in the Hollywood Hills of Los Angeles. Those sessions yielded Our First Record, though that music would not appear until 1980. The joint was jumpin', with musicians such as Mama Cass, David Crosby or Harvey Brooks dropping by, and the Firesign Theatre, famed for their spontaneously-combusting verbal free-association repartee. Towner could hold his own among them.

The Road roster of the Winter Consort would chug along for another year, then, minus Moore, who had left the group to play In New York's freer sphere of Paul Bley, went into the studio with producer not-yet-Sir George Martin and crafted a gleaming gem of an album, Icarus, which is addressed at greater length in my 2021piece. By this point, the cocoon the Consort had provided for the gestation of Oregon was beginning to feel constricting. The set pieces were too set, the free improvisations too limited and there was, all in all, too much structure. These guys wanted to get out there without a net, with a free improv piece in every set, and primarily present their own original repertoire. So they did just that. What had been out on the edge for the Consort was no longer an extreme. For Oregon, It was a founding norm.

Darling stayed with Winter for several more years, as well as growing his own career in other directions, but during that time would also be involved in one recording project or another with each of the four Oregonians. His oeuvre will be further addressed in a piece later this year. McCandless would continue to play in both bands, but never again did Towner or Moore work with Winter.

During that time of Oregon's nascence, late 1971, Towner would be invited to record with Weather Report, playing 12-string guitar, for one piece, Wayne Shorter's "The Moors", the second tune on their second album, I Sing the Body Electric (Columbia). The way in which this unfolded quickly earned its place in the lore: Without Towner's knowledge, the recording engineers were rolling tape while the guitarist was tuning his rented 12-string (his own had been stolen a few days before) and warming up. Having gotten the levels they needed, the engineers were about to turn off the tape when they were told to keep it running, in keeping with techniques learned from the masters at this, namely, Miles Davis and his producer, Teo Macero. When, a little while later, Towner went into the control room to announce that he was ready to record, he was told they already had everything they needed from him, and thanked him for coming in. I wish I would have asked him how that made him feel. I'll always wonder.

What Towner couldn't have known then was that he had laid a firm foundation for a groundbreaking solo career, launching those harmonics that converge somewhere just beyond infinity, optimistically implying limitless potential for humanity. Considering "The Moors" along with "Juniper Bear" from Icarus and '1 x 12' and '3 x 12' from Trios/Solos, he was out of the gate and gathering speed.

THE SILENCE OF A CANDLE *lyrics and music by Ralph Towner, 1972*

There falls the words of
fools about my ears
To hasten by the years
the journey that I make
through myself
The travelers that pass by
me as I wend my way
All reaching out to say
their path can show the
way to the truth
Answers everywhere
promising solutions to my
fears
Leading through halls with
no doors in the walls
And leave me in the
darkness
But to close my ears to all
will bar
the way for those
who've traveled through
The silence of a candle
burning in my room,
Speaks softly of a peaceful
balance to be found just
beyond
The road within without a
right or wrong
With lanes for only one
where
solely one must see and
will know
Stillness that resounds
singing sounds of hope to
light my way
Drawing me near to a path
that is clear
To free myself from the
darkness
And the voice within
the candle whispers of a
timeless peace that lies
beyond.

My 3/16/26 Facebook response to Yamamoto Masashi's praise of Towner's only known recorded vocal was: Ralph was not pleased with it, and, to my knowledge, nobody, myself included, ever heard him say otherwise. With time, I have come to think the honesty of his singing more than compensates for any lack of virtuosity. It's really rather sweet, but not saccharine.

In 2010, when I last saw him,Towner told me there were only 3 recordings he wished he hadn't made. This vocal was the oldest, followed by another early-70s (mis)adventure, on one tune for country-pop singer Michael Johnson's debut album. Last but least was recording, in 2004, with a Réunion-born Breton chromatic harmonica player named Olivier Ker Ourio. Given how much recording he did, I'd call that a pretty remarkable batting average.

Ralph Towner, before rehearsal for In Stride album, New York University, NY C, February 4, 2010. My most recent, and now final portrait.

All of the above occurred before Oregon recorded their debut album, Music of Another Present Era, for Vanguard. Thom Jurek's review, at https://www.allmusic.com/album/music-of-another-present-era-mw0000652646#review, is well worth reading. Soon after recording that, they also recorded their de facto debut for ECM, TRIOS/SOLOS, under both Towner and Moore's names, though, due to Vanguard's contract, never with all four playing together. It would be another decade before they recorded their full-blown, full-band debut for that label - but in introducing Towner to ECM founder and executive producer Manfred Eicher, bassist Dave Holland (whose band Towner was playing in at the time, along with the Brecker brothers) was handmaiden for a match made in heaven: Towner would record nearly all of his subsequent oeuvre, dozens of albums in all, including 8 solo outings, for Eicher's Munich-based label, beginning the next spring with his first studio solo effort, Diary. Not long after that, he and Larry Coryell played guitar duets, along with Walcott and Moore, on The Restful Mind, another Vanguard feature.

Vera Brandes on Facebook, 1/20/26: "The very first concert I ever organized as a promoter was Ralph and OREGON on March 21, 1974, at the Forum der VHS in Cologne. I had met Ralph in November 1973 at the Berlin Jazz Festival. My love for Ralph's playing, and for the congenial, collective act of instant composing (some call it "improvisation") that OREGON magically brought into being every time they played, was the spark that changed my life when I was seventeen."
Towner had played a solo set at JazzFest Berlin in 1973. Oregon would later record 2 albums for Brandes' VeraBra label and 3 more for her Intuition imprint.

Towner's phone was ringing more and more often as his career continued its exponential growth. He played on both of drummer Horacee Arnold's albums for Columbia, the second, Tales of the Exonerated Flea, being an undersung masterpiece of fusion at its best from those days, gloriously energetic and kinetic without devolving into obnoise and bombast. And what a roster! Along with Towner on 12-string: John Abercrombie on electric guitar, Jan Hammer cutting loose on keyboards more freely and flexibly than he was allowed to in the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Sonny Fortune tearing it up on soprano sax and flute, David Earle Johnson on congas, and more names you would recognize.

Oregon made a string of albums for Vanguard through the rest of the 1970s, including, among others, 1975's In Concert, which closes with Towner's composition "Yet to Be", featuring him on piano, to my ears as beautifully uplifting a tune as a human can create. 1977's Friends has a wider palette thanks to guest appearances from pianist Larry Karush, percussionist David Earle Johnson, and emerging saxophonist Bennie Wallace. Later that same year the band would record Violin, with Polish violinist Zbigniew Seifert, all participants stretching one another in gloriously growing ways. Last but not least, the duets album Moon and Mind, with Towner's only known recording on Hammond B-3 organ, sharing the. Composition credit with Walcott for "Elevator", as well as a nice rendering of Scott LaFaro's "Gloria's Step" on classical guitar with Moore on bass, digging deep, lovingly going way back.

In the next decade, extra-Oregonially, Towner would record two duet albums apiece with Abercrombie and Gary Burton, convene a quartet of Europeans - Jan Garbarek, Eberhard Weber and, Jon Christensen - collectively known as Solstice, for two albums, leading some at the time to liken him to Eicher's other American golden child, Keith Jarrett, who also had both American and European bands in those days, his 'Belonging' band overlapping Solstice by half, with Garbarek and Christensen. Plus guesting with Garbarek (and a wind harp), and with Egberto Gismonti, and, perhaps most uniquely, with the otherworldly London-based trio Azimuth, another of the label's more unusual groupings, comprising pianist/organist John Taylor, his then-wife vocalist and lyricist Norma Winstone and trumpeter Kenny Wheeler. Then there was Batik, a trio album with one of Bill Evans' former rhythm sections, Eddie Gomez and Jack DeJohnette. Old Friends, New Friends was a quintet outing, bringing together Wheeler, Gomez, Darling and Floridian drummer Michael Di Pasqua.

Towner was able to keep moving forward on multiple paths which fed and fed off of one another, Oregon being the constant throughout, with his ever-burgeoning output of new compositions fueling that quartet as well as his other, more fleeting ensembles and involvements, later including duets with bassist Gary Peacock, though his trio with Peacock and drummer Jerry Granelli never recorded, except on City of Eyes, a quintet with McCandless and trumpeter Markus Stockhausen. A 2008 duo with Sardinian trumpeter Paolo Fresu also proved fruitful for both.

All the while, Towner was cranking out new tunes, revising older ones, and keeping his fingernails in shape for the demanding 12-string and the gentler but still demanding classical guitars. Moore, who played with him for 55 years, longer than anyone else, marveled at the durability of Towner's fingernails, saying they were the strongest he'd ever seen, also the most-often filed, in order to keep them properly in trim for playing both types of guitars. Moore was even more impressed with Towner's process for writing, saying he never met anybody more focused on following through, nonstop, from start to finish, when composing a new piece. And he wrote a lot of tunes.

Oregon's last tour was in March, 2018, 10 dates in 6 European countries in 14 days, with a 5-day stretch of concerts every night in different countries. At that time, the band's web site, oregonband.com, was already in need of some updating, and still is, but carries a 2026 copyright, so somebody is maintaining its web presence. ralphtowner.com includes links to recordings of several performances as well as a comprehensive discography, and more. Its 'on tour' listings now says: "No performances presently scheduled." Indeed.

Post-Oregon, Towner continued playing selected solo concerts. There's part of one from Rome's Auditorium Parco della Musica on May 18, 2018, 24:42 of it, available on facebook.com/reel/847389361707683. Pushing 80 and still able to move nimbly and freely, gracefully, with nothing to prove, passing through lord knows how many of his tunes, all flowing together and turning into one another, all sounding at the same time as old as the hills and as new as tomorrow, effortlessly and seamlessly spanning centuries, genres, and continents, telling stories which optimistically address the human condition in ways often pretty and always beautiful, with that optimistically open-ended sound first heard on Road. And still doing that thing with his tongue…

He recorded his eighth and final solo album, At First Light, in Lugano, in February of 2022, playing only classical guitar, age having finally taken enough of a toll on his fingernails to preclude further performances on 12-string, though that was hardly a limitation for him.

As Mexican radio producer Alberto Gutiérrez Jazzóologo wrote on Facebook, 1/28/26: "…the sound is open, fragile, almost weightless. Nothing is decorated. Nothing is forced. The guitar doesn't perform — it thinks out loud. Each note seems less played than discovered, as if it had been there long before the fingers arrived. Listening to this record, I don't hear references — I sense presences. Dowland, Evans, Gershwin, Coltrane pass through like remembered dreams, not citations. Towner doesn't quote history; he inhabits it. And somehow, without nostalgia, echoes of Oregon appear — not as a return, but as a continuation of breath.

His most recent performance I can verify was an October 20, 2023, in duo with Norma Winstone at a church in Stockholm.

There are two volumes of Solo Guitar Works, published by Music Sales America in 2002 (ISBN-978-0971727809) and 2006 (ISBN978-0971727816), but both are now out of print, though copies can be found, at prices around $500 and up. Let us hope for more reasonably- priced new editions.

The work of composers like Towner and Carla Bley will stand the test of time, not as iconoclasts, but rather for being among the few operating on such an elevated level in their own time who didn't follow the trends of others: they created their own.

Looking ahead, Nikki Iles is planning a project involving Hamburg's NDR Big Band, vocalists Norma Winstone and Maria Pia De Vito, with a chamber orchestra, for a program of Iles' arrangements, with words, of Towner's and Oregon's music. Performance is scheduled for Hamburg's Kampnagel, February 21, 2027.

A selection from Towner's later non-ECM projects:

Un Altra Vita - (CAM, Italy) 1992 - soundtrack for Carlo Mazzacurati's film. Towner wrote the music and plays keyboards, accompanied by bass and drums. One of the rare instances in which he follows someone else's script and plays to truncated, set timings.

Songs Without End - (Tokuma, Japan) 1993 - duets on guitar with pianist Marc Copland, another serious student of Bill Evans, including renderings of Evans' and Miles Davis' "Blue in Green" as well as Miles' "Nardis", a Jobim and a Gershwin tune, several originals by both players, and "Freebop", which carries both their names. No doubt Evans smiled down upon them.

Fabula (Verve, Portugal) 1995 - singer Maria João and band. Towner's Brazilian chops on guitars combine nicely with Argentinian bandoneon by Dino Saluzzi and the Portuguese guitar stylings of Ricardo Rocha while Mario Laginha's piano makes it all even more orchestral, driven by cogent rhythm from Manu Katché and Kai Eckhardt de Camargo.

If Summer Had Its Ghosts (Discipline, UK) 1997 - Bill Bruford with Ralph Towner and Eddie Gomez. Bruford, veteran drummer for Yes, King Crimson, Gong and National Health, among others, brought bassist Gomez and Towner back together nearly two decades after their initial collaborations on a couple of Towner's ECM albums, this time adding electronic keyboards to his guitars and piano for Bruford's compositions, concluding with one of his own, "Now Is the Next Time".

Verso, (Provocateur, UK) - 1998, Maria Pia De Vito, John Taylor, Ralph Towner - The Italian singer with English pianist Taylor and American expat Towner. De Vito had worked with Taylor, Taylor had worked with Towner, but Towner had never worked with De Vito. Be that as it may, they all got along famously, on both vocal and instrumental numbers.

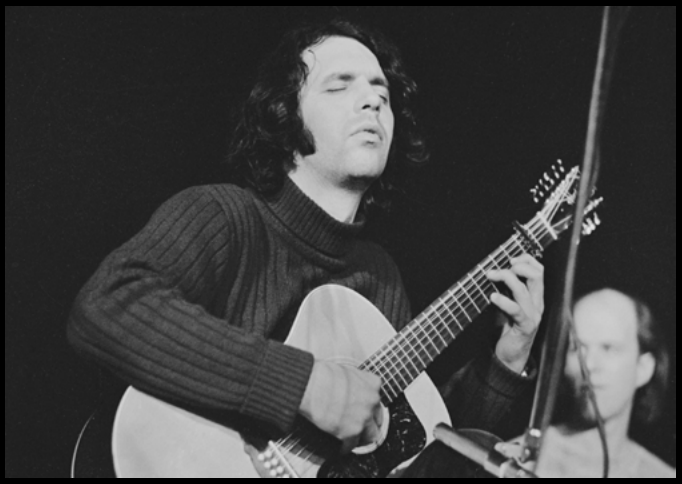
Nomad's Notebook (Intuition, Germany) -1999 - American saxophonist Andy Middleton worked his Banff Workshop connections and brought Towner and Dave Holland together in the studio for the first time since their only earlier collaboration, on one tune for Kenny Wheeler's album Deer Wan. 3 of the 9 Tynes are Towner's, who wields both guitars and piano. Nothing groundbreaking, but nicely done.

Nel Respiro - (Provocateur, UK) - 2002 - Maria Pia De Vito reconvenes the trio with Taylor and Towner, adding bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Patrice Heral for mostly her own tunes, along with some of Swallow's, Towner's, and one by Rita Marcotuili. Though you never hear all five players together, it hangs together plenty well enough to feel varied rather than fragmented.

From a Dream - Wolfgang Muthspiel, Slava Gregorian and Ralph Towner (Material, Austria) - 2007 - Guitar duets and trios, recorded in Australia on Muthspiel's own label. Kazakh-born Australian Grigoryan and Towner stick to acoustic, as does Muthspiel on one tune, otherwise going with his electric. Six of the 10 tunes are by Towner. Lots of chops all around, but no cutting contests, rather, collective efforts creating upward spirals filled with delicious subtleties. They would record again, 5 years later, in Lugano, for ECM.

Duende - (CAM Jazz, Italy) - 2016, Javier Girotto Aires Tango, with Towner guesting on classical guitar and contributing 6 of the 12 tunes. Bandleader Girotto's soprano sax enticed Towner into some latter-day explorations using tango as a starting point, yielding a sweet yet substantial sound.

I've already addressed 'early' Towner and Oregon, in Cadence vol 47 no. 4 Oct-Dec 2021, pp 55 - 73, or 2021 Annual Edition pp. 224 - 242, which covers the band up until Collin Walcott's 1984 death. In the future, I hope to address Oregon's subsequent 34 years and their 15 further albums recorded during that time.



Ralph Towner in performance with Oregon, Case Western University, Cleveland OH, November 30, 1973. Cleaning this one up as best I could made me wish I'd started taking better care of my negatives sooner than I did, to say nothing of wishing I'd learned to shoot in available darkness at a younger age. It wasn't long after this when I stopped shooting those guys in performance: I just wanted to sit and take it all in as it unfolded.

Oregon open workshop with college students, Lexington VA, March 7, 1974. This was the day after they'd played a concert on campus at Washington and Lee University. I openly admit to helping make their visit happen.

Oregon band photo, Rockbridge County VA, March 6, 1974. L-R: Ralph Towner, Collin Walcott, Paul McCandless and Glen Moore. Though not shot specifically for that usage, this was my first (and still only) cover photo for Downbeat, shot in the barn on the farm where I lived at the time.

front cover of Downbeat issue of October 10, 1974.

Ralph Towner and Collin Walcott warming up for Oregon's performance in the Garden at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, September 13, 1974. One of several shots I still like which I got that day, wrapping up shooting as the concert began…

Gary Burton band photo opportunity for the press, Sydney, Australia, June 7, 1974. I never got a shot of Towner laughing like that, because whenever he did while I was around, I was always laughing just as hard, too hard to hold a camera steady. Upon recently seeing this image for the first time, Steve Swallow - who was also on that tour, and in the same room when this shot was made - responded: "What I loved most about Ralph, aside of course from the warmth and sparkle of his music, was his companionship at the roadstop table. He did everything at once with hilarious gusto: chewed his food, waved his arms, discoursed on the meaning of life, smoked a cigarette (those were the days). There was never such a cure for the road doldrums as lunch with Ralph." Photo credit: Trevor James Robert Dallen, Fairfax Media Archives

Ralph Towner, 264 West 18th St., New York City, October, 1978. The front room of his third-floor walkup. Still my favorite. Simple, direct, and low-tech. Also the only image I've ever had stolen off the walls of an installation, in the early 1980s. The purloined print has been sighted since, first in the Bay Area and later in Milwaukee.

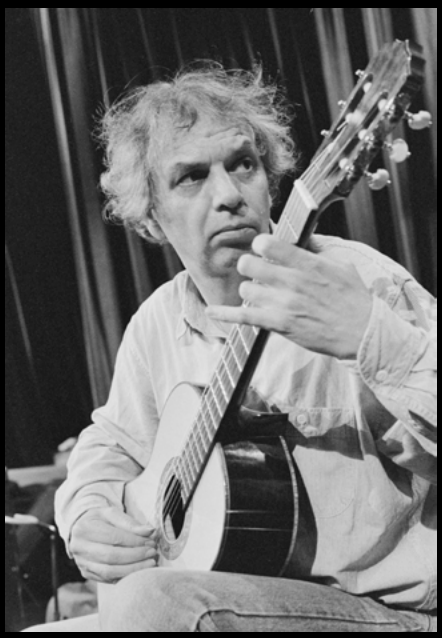
Ralph Towner and John Abercrombie tuning up for duet performance, The Bottom Line, New York City, October 1, 1982. Those guys pulled things out of each other nobody else could. Talk about a universal plectral spectrum…

Ralph Towner sound checking his arsenal of synthesizers for Oregon performance, University of Delaware, NewArk DE, April 20, 1991. I never did get a shot of him at the piano which I liked, though I sure liked to hear him play. A prime example would be his tune “Yet to Be”, which closes Oregon’s 1975 In Concert album. That’s what I want to be hearing when I die.

Ralph Towner sound checking on mellophone for Oregon performance, Town Hall, New York City, November 19, 1982. This was shortly prior to recording their full-band debut on ECM, and during the time Towner was recording his third solo album, Blue Sun, with him on this horn and several other instruments, including synthesizers, as well as guitars. Offering his densest palette, some have described that album as how he dealt with his mid-life crisis, rather than getting a sports car.

Oregon listening to playback, recording sessions for Beyond Words (Chesky), St. Peter's Episcopal Church, New York City, March 20 - 23, 1995. L-R: Glen Moore, Paul McCandless and Ralph Towner. This image brings to mind that Bismarck saying about two things you don't want to see being made: sausages and laws, to which I would add a third: record albums.

Ralph Towner at Oregon recording sessions for Beyond Words (Chesky), St. Peter's Episcopal Church, New York City, March 20 - 23, 1995. (See caption for #13, above). Despite all the vexations of its creation, the album turned out quite nicely. The recording captures well the sound of a very live space, even warmer and deeper than the high standards to which ECM had made us all accustomed.



Ralph Towner at sound check for performance with Fabula, JazzFest Berlin 1996, House of the Cultures of the World, Berlin, November 2, 1996. Towner was a guest star with Portuguese singer Maria João and her band.

Ralph Towner, his wife Mariella LoSardo, and Paul McCandless, on a Deutsche Bahn train somewhere between Regensburg and Viersen, October 31, 1997. En route between concerts on an Oregon tour, McCandless is showing Lo Sardo around his soprano saxophone, with commentary by Ralph.

Ralph Towner at sound check for Oregon concert, Lenfest Center, W&L University, Lexington VA, March 15, 2001. There he is doing that thing with his tongue.

Oregon, before rehearsal for In Stride album, New York University, NYC, February 4, 2010. L-R: Paul McCandless, Glen Moore, Ralph Towner, Mark Walker. My most recent, and now final band photo.

GREG ABATE
SAXOPHONE AND MULTIPLE INSTRUMENTS

Cadence: Let's start with your touring schedule; your website mentions that you are touring 225 days a year. That's an amazing amount! Can you talk about your performance schedule and how it evolved? What is it like today compared to ten years ago?

G.A.: Regarding my career, it's a lot of hard work - blood, sweat, and tears, making contacts, following through, being persistent, and trying to get an agent to book in certain areas. Things are much busier for me now. I am going to Texas next weekend to play at the Texas Jazz Festival, and to a club in San Antonio. I will come home briefly and then leave the next week for England. I'll play there and head to Austria to play three nights in Vienna, home again, and then spend more time in the UK. It will add up to almost a month in Europe!

Cadence: Greg, you have a special ability- persistence. Can you elaborate on your blood, sweat, and tears, and how your work has developed?

G.A.: I haven't done it on my own; I've had help from agents, musicians, and fans that would lead me to contacts. Playing at different venues also leads to bookings.

You have to be persistent and have confidence in yourself. I've had that consistently, I'm not gonna give up, I'm gonna to do this to be a jazz musician. I feel as though I am worthy of it; I've been working on my craft and feel natural about playing jazz. I love to create melodies; I am a harmony fanatic!! I love to compose, and am really involved in the creative process. I've recorded over 30 CDs as leader with various record companies. I hope this answers your question about blood, sweat and tears.

You know when I first started out there was no Internet. You sent your tapes, letters, press packs through the mail. Most likely you wouldn't get a reply. Same thing with calls, they seldom called back.

I was persistent; some people got turned off by that.

Cadence: Do you have preferences as to where you perform? Do you prefer a country to perform in, a special venue? Do you perform a certain type of jazz music?

GA: I like NY, Boston, San Francisco, and Chicago. As far as venues, my favorite spots are Jazz Showcase and Smalls NYC, Cafe Lena in Saratoga Springs, Florida, the Side Door Jazz in Old Lyme Connecticut, Chans in Rhode Island, and Scullers in Boston.

In the UK, I play at 606 Jazz Club and Ronnie Scott's in London.

I love touring the world. I've been to Canada, Russia, Georgia, UK, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, and other countries in Europe. I have also been a featured artist in 48 USA States!

I have been an adjunct professor of Jazz at Rhode Island College from 2001 -2023.

I had four jazz combos and a Jazz Theory class along with private lessons - saxophone, flute, chord voicings and composition.
I've written over 300 songs and recorded over 24 CDs . I also conduct classes and act as guest artist at different universities, high schools and intermediate schools. I am co-sponsored,in part, by the Conn Selmer instrument company.
As far as music preferences, I like jazz quartet and quintet performance . I travel mostly out of home base as a soloist with different trios comprised of piano, bass, and drums.
It can be intense. I travel mostly every day by train, get to the venue, meet the trio, play the concert, get sleep and repeat the next day. Occasionally, I would have two days in one place and ride with a friend by car to some gigs!
Cadence: What kind of projects would you like to do that you haven't already done?
G.A.: Recording with strings would be great, join a jazz festival circuit . I would love to do a jazz band CD recording of my original music. I am planning a Ray Charles tribute CD as an instrumental recording. I'll be playing some songs he sang when I was in his band. It was so emotional and moving sitting in the sax section in front of him! I played lead alto 1973-1974. I would live to write a jazz book! I've written so much music, jazz ideas, jazz phrases. I am disorganized; I wish I was better at organorganizing my ideas! I have played with many big bands, college high schools, the United States Airmen of Note, but none of them have been professionally recorded for a CD release. I would like to play more jazz festivals . I play certain ones; I would love to have an agent that could book them for me.
How about a book: My Life In All Keys!
Cadence: You worked with Ray Charles, how did that happen? Do you have some memories of working with Ray?
GA: From late 1969 through 1972, I was working in Hollywood California, with a rhythm and blues band doing cover tunes and did a few sessions for Motown for this vocalist, Gloria Jones and Wolfman Jack. I don't know what happened to those recordings.
Regarding Ray Charles, I was living with other musicians in Santa Monica and had lost my gig. I was playing at a club on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood called Filthy McNasty's owned by Evel Knievel. The band either broke up or the gig ended, so I was without a job. I had no money and my roommates wanted my rent! I went down to the local 47 union hall there the next day, looking around at the information boards. I noticed that Ray Charles was auditioning for a new orchestra tomorrow at 10:10 AM at Ray Charles Enterprise's office & recording studio.
I showed up and sat in the sax section, the lead alto chair, and the band director was rehearsing us getting the sound of the band. Ray came in through the side door into the studio room, walked up to me and asked who it was that was playing lead alto. "My name is Greg Abate, Mr. Charles". He said "I like your sound!" So, after three more trial rehearsals, I ended up with the gig as lead alto!!

Cadence: Any other memories stand out about Ray Charles, his habits or your interactions with him or what you experienced?

G.A.: Ray was very strict with drummers playing a particular cymbal and if they continued to use the cymbal were fired after two warnings.

He had a drummer fly to Italy as he fired the other .

Also, one time we played in Boston at Fenway Park. The stage was put out near the pitch mount. Ray was talking to the guitarist about doing something and the guitarist didn't do it. He fired him right there on the stage at Fenway and the guitarist had to walk off the band stand through the playing field.

Ray used to like to sit up in the cockpit with pilots!

He was a master chess player on braille.

He could hear a wrong note and from which horn!

Cadence: Talk about your repertoire, what music you like to play. Do you have the opportunity to play the music that you love the most? Who are the composers and musicians that inspire you?

G.A.: My repertoire covers many standards and Bop heads and a lot of my original compositions which have been recorded. I have the opportunity to play whatever music I want at every gig I do. I only do jazz, my own and standards mixed or all originals. I only perform in listening rooms, no parties or events. I pay my dues doing all that for the last 20 years, I'm able to do what I want to do and I get paid for it. I make my living playing jazz and occasionally teaching a couple of lessons here and there and doing some master classes.

There are many artists that have inspired me but for alto sax especially Charlie Parker, Phil Woods, Art Pepper, Cannonball Adderley, Lou Donaldson - on tenor sax I like to listen to Wayne Shorter, Dexter Gordon, Harold Land, Pepper Adams - on baritone sax Wayne Shorter, Joe Farrell, soprano sax and flute.

... of course I think I have been influenced by many while not trying to be like or sound like anyone else.

Cadence: What are your favorite bands you have been in, and why? Talk about what you liked about your different bands.

G.A.: So many bands with different histories; I learned a lot! First off, Ray Charles Orchestra, 1973-74 and 1979 -1984.

With the Duke Belaire Jazz Band of Providence, Rhode Island, I played with NE top local players, who were older and more experienced. We played music of Duke, Silver, Basie, Buddy Rich, and more... every Monday! Then the Artie Shaw orchestra, under the direction of Dick Johnson, 1885-87. Artie was still with us however Dick did all the Shaw Library. We toured through the USA.

Of course, I play with other big bands that were playing the music of Woody Herman and also Stan Kento***n.***

Cadence: Please share a memory of working with the Duke Belaire band, what you know about Duke and what you experienced, where you played, what rehearsals were like, etc.

G.A.: Duke was a great guy and good big band drummer. He held that Monday Night Band for over 26 years every Monday night. It was a great education for

me being with older and same age players with all different experiences and levels of playing. Being around great players like the late Dick Johnson who was the leader of the Artie Shaw band; he was a mentor and friend to me. I learned so much from him, not only about playing saxophone in the section, but about improvisation, chord changes, and life!
He was just a good and generous person.
I did play tenor sax under his direction on the Artie Shaw Orchestra in 1985-87. There were other musicians in the band that also influenced me and challenged me to become a better jazz musician. Rehearsals were fun, and also demanding, because a lot of the charts were very difficult and with that goes a lot of stylistic playing articulations - coordinating the breath in the right place, dynamics, all a big part of playing in a saxophone section so that was an education for me.
Cadence: Could you share some memories of working with Artie Shaw?
G.A.: Artie Shaw was an intellectual, and an author, after he stopped playing clarinet. He was one of my favorite clarinet players.
He often travelled with the band, sometimes on the bus, or would meet us at the gigs in concert halls and would speak to the audience about the music business both the present and past times. One time we were playing at the Coronation Room in Disneyland. Artie was sitting in the audience with a long trench coat and large brim hat. People were dancing to his music wonderfully, not realizing that he was right there in a front row seat, watching them dance to his music. That same evening I played clarinet in the section as one of my doubles, and in the dressing room I took my clarinet on the intermission because I thought maybe Artie would come in there and I could ask him a question. I asked the master a question: "Could you help me with this part?What should I do with this type of fingering?" He immediately burst out,
"I hate the clarinet, don't talk to me about the clarinet",and that was the last that I talked to him about it. However, he would offer great suggestions to us in the saxophone section about the most important things: phrasing together, breathing articulation, etc. he was very, very strict.
Cadence: CD Live At Birdland NYC in 1991 on the Candid Jazz Label with the trio of James Williams, Rufus Reid and Kenny Washington. Was this your first CD? Great line up. Had you worked with this band prior to the recording? What led up to this recording and what are your memories?
G.A.: Great question, and I'm glad you asked that. This one was kind of special to me because in 1989, I had a gig in Montreal. I was living in Cranston, Rhode Island which is about a 78 hour drive in good weather. Anyway, there was a blizzard that day, and I left in the late morning. My wife,at the time,was saying that I was crazy to drive to Montreal in a blizzard. It's gonna get worse as you go, but I was relentless. The club was called 2080 Club. I had played there before a few times and when I got there, the sidewalks were full of snow unplowed. I was able to park in front of the venue. It was closed. I was kind of shocked and I didn't know what was gonna happen. I should've thought wow it's a blizzard. They might not be open, but I didn't think of that. I just went and there was a

coffee shop open next-door to it. I went in and had a coffee and I asked them. "Do you think that they'll plow the sidewalks and have the club open next-door?" The guy said "Oh yeah, we usually get plowed out because the businesses still want to be open. We're just waiting for the snow to stop." The musicians showed up a little later and we set up. There were only a few people in the club. It was kind of disheartening , and I didn't know what to think for one thing. Would I be driving or staying over, I did't know that.

During the break, a gentleman at the bar called me over and asked me if I ever played in New York and I said not often, that I did a few times with my fusion band back in the 70s. When I played with Ray Charles, we played at Carnegie Hall and he said wow that's pretty cool. he says I'm affiliated with Candid Records. My partner and I record for Candid artists that are in the area. Would you be interested to do a record for us? I said yes and it came about that they had arranged the rhythm session for me. I had no idea who they were, but I showed up at Birdland. They were on the stage waiting for me. I came in with my music and handed out the charts. I got to know them a little bit of course - hi how are you doing? Great to meet you etc. We played through my tunes that I was gonna record. It was a two night session. That recording with Candid Records was a catalyst for me; I did two or three additional recordings with them, and then onward to other labels and the different things that I do now.

Cadence: what about your other Candid releases and your thoughts and experiences with the label?

G.A: It was a great experience; I got to record with well known players. For Straight Ahead, my second Candid release, we had Kenny Washington , George Mraz, and the late, great Hilton Ruiz and Claudio Roditi.

I was able to introduce my original compositions to the world .

The next one was Dr Jekyl and Mr Hyde , featuring Greg Abate and my late, great friend, the alto player Richie Cole. Live At Chans in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, was where, many years later, I played with the great, late Phil Woods in Whaling City Sound Records!

Cadence Thoughts and memories of Richie Cole, and the Dr Jeckel album?

G.A.: Richie Cole and I got together later in life as we did not really become friends until 1992 and we did some gigs at Birdland and Fat Tuesday's in NY , Chans in Woonsocket,! Scullers in Boston, some gigs in Baltimore, and many in NM and St Paul, Minnesota. We had talked about doing a recording together and it took place live at Chans for Dr Jekyl and Hyde. Alan Bates of Candid Records liked the idea. We both were Berkelee School of Music students and I was always a fan of Richie. I thought he played great at an early age. We did have a chemistry and love for each other and were good partners in Jazz. Where Richie stayed mostly with the Alto, I was always drawn to play the tenor saxophone, Bari Sax soprano, and Flute and I did play these instruments when we played gigs together, as well as Alto duets. Richie is gone too soon. I am very sorry to lose such a great friend and a musical force. RIP Alto Madness

Cadence: You say that you were always drawn to other instruments. Talk about the different instruments that you play, their characteristics, and how you use the different instruments in your performances. Which instrument did you start on?

G.A.: I began with the clarinet when I was 9 years old. I wanted to play the trombone but my mother said "no , but you can learn to play the clarinet." Thanks Mom!! I played the clarinet through 6,7,8, grade and in the ninth grade I started playing the alto sax through high school in all the bands. I continued on to Berklee and not until four years later did I get a tenor and then soprano a few years later and the baritone sax followed! I learned quickly to play the flute when I was in the Ray Charles Orchestra! I've since been playing it and love it. I sometimes play the alto flute. To answer your question, I love each one as being my horn depending on which I choose for a particular voice or sound on a song. I do play each differently,where as alto and baritone are more bop oriented and tenor is more modern angular playing as is the soprano. The flute is also that way. I have been told many times that I sound like I play each as my own horn . I love the different vibrations each instrument has - each instrument lets me play differently!

Cadence: I see Daniel Carter lug around a bunch of musical instruments en route to gigs. It's quite a sight. Do you travel with all your instruments?

G.A.: I sometimes travel with all my instruments if I'm local and I'm driving to the gig. Other times I'll always the Alto, the Ceprano, and the Flute. There have been times when I have flown with all my instruments but it depends on what concert I'm doing and what music I'm doing. So it's not always all of them but sometimes it's at least two or three of the horns !

Questions from Musicians

Harvie S.: "If you could play any other instrument what would it be"? What or who was your biggest influence that got you interested in Jazz?

G.A: Piano would be the first choice and although I'm a functional pianist, I would love to be at the level of my saxophone and flute playing. Paul Desmond and Dave Brubeck were my first influences that got me going. When I was in high school, my band director was a great classical pianist with not much emphasis on the jazz artists. It wasn't until Berklee when I was introduced to jazz history!

Miles Oland: What is your practice regiment like when you're on the road?

G.A: I try to play different melodic phrases, keeping away from my muscle memory habits. Also,I may learn a new tune or compose a new one. I'll play through chords with no accompaniment. I may spend time getting the right feel with my reeds . I play flute on my gigs as well and I like reading etudes and practicing with long tones. I take chances on my gigs , I like to jump in with no preparation, as that is where I feel I learn the most.

Jamey Aebersold: Who did you take jazz lessons from as a teenager?

G.A: In High School I had Henry Devyst and at Berklee, Rod Ferland, Joe Viola and Charlie Mariano. Memories with Henry Devyst was most memorable as a child because I started playing clarinet young and was in the Saturday morning class with about 40 clarinet kids. Henry would be our teacher. I continued on with my lessons with him in his private studio, about three blocks from my home. I liked to improvise and show him things that I made up at my lesson but I never practiced my reading that well and I was a very poor reader. He was very frustrated about that. He said that he thought I played some nice things, but stressed I had to learn to read which I indeed did. Rod was my first teacher at Berklee and was so great to study with him. He was patient with me; helped me get going! Joe Viola was very great - he was more hands on with comping changes and having me improvise. I remember him having me improvise with no chords, just looking at the changes and trying to make up a solo. I found it very difficult to do that, but it helped a lot, and he would sit and play along with me on his method books; it was challenging. Charlie was more of an in the moment type guy. I got from him that he would rather be on the road than teaching. He was very aloof and also a very strong personality; of course I loved his playing very much.

My Badge of Honor

Interview and photos by Ken Weiss

Ricky Ford (b. March 4, 1954, Boston, Massachusetts) may no longer have one of the most recognizable names on the American Jazz scene, he's lived abroad for the past twenty-seven years, but during his earlier career he was one of the most trumpeted tenor saxophonists. Embracer of the total scope of the genre, from Traditional to Hardbop to the Avant-Garde – Ford trained at the New England Conservatory after being "discovered" by pianist/educator Ran Blake and was soon accepted into the Duke Ellington Orchestra under the leadership of Mercer Ellington (1974-76). Afterwards, he went on to work with such luminaries as Charles Mingus (1976-77), Dannie Richmond (1978-81), Lionel Hampton (1980-82), Abdullah Ibrahim (1983-90), Mal Waldron (1989-94), and made recording sessions with a wide range of artists including Red Rodney, Yusef Lateef, Jaki Byard, Freddie Hubbard, McCoy Tyner, Sonny Stitt, George Russell, Ran Blake, Richard Davis, Tom Harrell and Steve Lacy. As a leader, Ford has recorded more than twenty albums, many on the Muse and Candid label. Ford now lives in Paris and has spent his time abroad in France except from 2000 – 2006 when he lived in Turkey to teach at Istanbul Bilgi University. While in France, he organized a Jazz festival, started painting, and founded an art gallery. He remains dedicated to the music rather than pushing for acclaim. This interview took place by Zoom on February 6, 2022, with the occasional happy squeals of his grandchild heard in the background.

Cadence: Your newest recording The Wailing Sounds of Ricky Ford is chiefly dedicated to Paul Gonsalves and Harry Carney. Talk about the album and why you made the homage now, roughly fifty years after you played in the Duke Ellington Orchestra under Mercer Ellington?

Ricky Ford: During a visit back to America to play in 2018, Neal Weiss came to hear me play at the Side Door in Connecticut. He said he had a record company [Whaling City Sound] and gave me a handful of CDs but I never had a CD player to be able to listen to them. I saw he had artists like Kenny Barron and Dave Liebman. He said most of the people he was recording were from the New England area. Maybe a year later, he sent me a proposal about a concept CD that he wanted to make. Because I was from New England, he wanted to do something dedicated to Paul Gonsalves and I explained that I had already made a lot of things dedicated to him including "Happy Reunion" on Shorter Ideas and "Cop Out" on Hot Brass. I never had done anything on Harry Carney but a couple of times I had played his solo on "Praise God" on tenor when I was involved in some sacred concerts, so I knew the Harry Carney thing fit very well on tenor. Plus, we grew up in the same neighborhood in Boston, Massachusetts, so I had this connection with Harry Carney and Paul Gonsalves. It turned out that it was easier for me to reinterpret Harry Carney than it was Paul Gonsalves, although I had already played some of his songs. It was easier for Harry Carney because I had never really documented any tenor saxophone

interpretations of his baritone solos. I did a lot of research for this CD, a considerable amount of research for the types of things that Harry Carney was doing, and I came up with some interesting things. I found a piece that English saxophonist Kenny Graham was commissioned to write for Harry Carney called "Mabulala", which was a perfect vehicle for me to play on this CD. I also found "Frustration" which Duke had written for Harry Carney, and this was another perfect composition for me to reinterpret. I also wrote a considerable amount of music and I named one of the songs for Paul Gonsalves called "Paul's Scene," which is actually really steeped in Bebop, Lester Young, and Charlie Parker. It has a good amount of reference to some things that maybe haven't been explored in recent times in Jazz – this kind of tenor vernacular with melodies very prominent and involved and catchy. I came up with these things but in the back of my mind, Coleman Hawkins was there too. I played five ballads on this CD and all of them had something clearly connected to the legacy of Coleman Hawkins. Some of the ballads I wrote myself and some were things that he recorded that had never been interpreted before by anybody else such as "The Essence of You." During the pandemic I had a chance to do a lot of research about Jazz. Between the pandemic and no longer organizing a Jazz festival or running an art gallery and painting, I had more time to focus on my music on a really intense point. That's how the recording came about.

Cadence: What led you to move to France in 1997? Prior to leaving, you were considered one of the top tenor saxophonists to emerge during the '70s and early '80s. USA Today ran a 1983 cover story entitled "New Jazz Stars of the '80s" that featured you, along with Wynton Marsalis and Terri Lyne Carrington.

RF: I actually left for France well before '97, I think it was '89. I was involved in teaching in America so I was always going back and forth – six months in America and six months in France – but in 1997, I decided to make it permanent and to stay here full time. I had to really concentrate on being in one place in order to think about my music a little bit more and I had family obligations. It was really for personal reasons, I started a new family here.

Cadence: You're part of the "lost generation" of Jazz musicians, a group of mid-career musicians born between 1940 and 1955 who were overlooked by way of a major marketing movement pushing the new college-trained artists known as the "Young Lions" in the early '90s. How was it to see the new musicians getting the major acclaim at the expense of your generation? Do you feel you lost recognition?

RF: I'm not too sure there's any loss of recognition today with the Internet. With the Internet you have a certain amount of archival value so that things are not really physically based anymore. I always got press - when I was in New York and even today. If I have a gig, there's a lot of press, and people go on the Internet and find me, a whole bunch of stuff comes up and they say, "Oh wow, I'm gonna go hear this guy play." I've been around a long time so there is a lot out about me, other people haven't been around as long. If you think

about all the guys that came up in the '90s, sadly many of these guys are not here anymore. A lot of guys passed away, which is very sad. Sometimes the monetary success is good but sometimes it's not. I'm almost 68-years-old, that's something that's not normal for a Jazz musician. Most Jazz musicians never make it to 68. I'm not bragging, I'm very happy that I'm still able to make a record, play music, and be happy about my career. Nobody's writing about the "Young Lions" today. The "Young Lions" of today are not playing Jazz – they're doing hip-hop or making their livelihood off of YouTube or Instagram. Is it really relevant that 500 people are gonna look at you in three minutes? I mean, the more relevant thing is that you play music.

Cadence: You're talking about how you measure success?

RF: It's not just measuring success, it's measuring a certain longevity that you can achieve in music. Success and longevity are two opposite things. If you want to play music, it's okay, but from time immemorial, success in music is not conducive to music, it's conducive to success. Music is something totally apart from that. If you go all the way back to Mozart and Classical music, why did those guys know their music the way they did? A lot of the time, market demand has nothing to do with music. Music is a downstream quality if you really think about it. Something that's written is finite, it's not the same thing as someone just playing music. I made Jaki Byard's last album with him, he wrote out all of his solos. Everything was written, he was reading everything that he played. You have to listen to the recording and make your own decision about improvisation versus finite writing. There's a big difference, you know. Everything is market driven. If you think about Mozart, he died with no money, he was poor. Everything he did didn't mean anything in the end, but his music left something to us. He worked his whole life and having more talent was pretty much the same then as it is now for musicians. I think success is really measured with your health. If you're healthy, if you're able to pick up your horn and play, you have a certain amount of success. If you can play an hour a day, you're successful. [Laughs]

Cadence: You're not asking for much.

RF: If you can play every day, if you can write some music, if someone calls you and you go somewhere and play, there's a certain amount of success there. I have a new CD coming out that's a little different from what's been done and that's a success story. At 68, to make a new CD as a saxophonist? How many saxophonists that are 68-years-old on Earth are making new CDs? None.

Cadence: How did life change for you once you moved to France?

RF: It didn't change too much, maybe there were less peers than in New York. Proximity, closeness to the [New York] marketplace, and missing opportunities to record was one of the biggest things.

Cadence: What aspect of French culture has puzzled you the most?

RF: Maybe that the music industry is a little bit different. It's not as community-based as in America but that's not puzzling, that's a reality. You're not going to be able to go out to a neighborhood joint and see a mom and pop

[setup] that's been there for thirty years producing Jazz in their club. There's not a community-based thing going on for the music here but it's not puzzling, it's a reality. It's only recently that people are more disposed to having music in community situations.

Cadence: Which expatriated American musicians have you done significant work with in Europe?

RF: I made a recording with Rhoda Scott. I've done a couple CDs with Kirk Lightsey, and I've done a lot with the late Bobby Few. I worked with Jimmy Smith while he was touring and one time I worked with Joey DeFrancesco when he played here. I used to go hang out with Johnny Griffin sometimes at his house and spend the weekend. He had a little chateau down south and we used to practice together, although we never played together professionally. He was a funny guy. One time I went to see him when he was doing a big Monk project with Kenny Barron, Don Sickler, and Eddie Bert. I went to see him backstage when he was having dinner and I poked my head in to say hello and Johnny saw me and said, "Hi Ricky, bad motherfucker!" [Laughs]

Cadence: Do you identify more as an American or Frenchman at this time?

RF: I am a citizen of the world.

Cadence: That's a very diplomatic answer. You have a French accent.

RF: A French accent? I really think it's the echo from the Zoom. Well, it may be true, I'm trying to speak French.

Cadence: You make it a point to come back to America to play on a semiregular basis. Talk about that and do you feel your reputation here is what it should be?

RF: Yes. Normally, it's been once or twice a year.

Cadence: You've been quite the musical chameleon. You've recorded with Traditionalists such as Red Rodney, as well as those pushing the envelope, including Steve Lacy. Those are such great extremes.

RF: I had already worked with Mingus and Duke Ellington – those are extremes too. I was working with Red Rodney a few years before I left New York, he had just gotten his teeth and had just started to rejuvenate his career. He had been inactive for many years due to personal reasons that I'm not really disposed to talk about but he had all of his teeth redone with implants and we made a record together called The 3R's with Richie Cole. I worked with Rodney for about a year. When I was in New York, I was working with eight or nine different bands and it was great. I worked with Beaver Harris in 360 Degrees. That was a hell of a band. We made records with Don Pullen, Hamiet Bluiett, Frances Haynes, Cameron Brown, Ken McIntyre. We used to rehearse three or four days a week, religiously, and everybody was on time. We were in utopia. It was like having lunch and we weren't eating anything but music. I used to work with Ronnie Boykins, who spent many years with Sun Ra. With Charlie Persip, it was a big band, which was totally different. I worked with Lionel Hampton and I did a lot of things with Dannie Richmond and Jack Walrath. The biggest extreme is to sit around, not doing nothing, and

then decide one day that you are going to play your horn. Now that's a giant extreme right there. Okay, that's an inside joke for those who play music – you're not performing so you just pick up your horn. That's a giant extreme! [Laughs] A very healthy extreme because the music makes everything work in your brain. It's a healthy thing for your lungs and body to play the saxophone and trumpet.

Cadence: Along that same line, the bio section of your website states, "Ford's fluency in most idioms of modern jazz has perhaps hindered the development of an individual voice." Why list that on your site?

RF: That came from an All About Jazz article and of course, the journalists need to say something that's gonna coincide with the narrative that you're hindered. They already know, "Oh, he's not part of the "Young Lions"," so they have to think of a reason why and pinpoint it into a statement. The press has to say something and they can't think about anything else to say. This element [of fluency] still exists in my music if you listen to my new CD. I'm not staying in one place, I was taught that way. Jaki Byard said you should be able to play all styles. Who else that we can think about has done everything? Not too many people. If you try to not do everything, you could specialize in one thing and maybe be successful. If you're doing everything, you're open to a certain criticism of not finding your own voice and this is not really true because all we have to do is look at the history of the music and the biggest, most guilty musician on the planet that did many styles is John Coltrane, but he was very successful. He was praised but it seems like they said, "The next motherfucker that comes up and does everything, we're going to just chop him down!" Who else did everything? Coleman Hawkins. If you look at his career, he did everything. Who started all of this? Coleman Hawkins! Who else did everything? Lester Young! But you have to really dig deep to find what they did because what they did is not going to be talked about. No one is going to say they did everything. They'll say it about Coltrane, and that's the last person they'll say it about. They're not gonna say that about Ricky Ford. My badge of honor is being a multi-stylist.

Cadence: You put that statement on your own website. Do you agree with that statement? Do you feel this situation has hindered your individual voice?

RF: I put it on my website because it came from All About Jazz. I really don't care about what it says. It's a little bit of prestige, it's not a real big thing. If I worried about it so much, I would never put it on my website, but today, I'm trying to flesh it out for you and the readers to understand why somebody would say this with the historical precedent set by Coltrane. We should be very happy that he played everything that he played. It shouldn't be so cut and dry. If it were that cut and dry, every single journalist would be out there with a saxophone making CDs to prove us wrong about what we do as musicians. Look at Stan Getz, he did everything. He didn't sound the same all the time. Miles Davis didn't sound the same all the time. The jazz purists are pissed because they changed. All that crossover stuff, that Creed Taylor stuff, pissed

them off but now we're happy they did what they did because it's part of Jazz history, but at that time they weren't too happy.

Cadence: How do you go about expressing yourself musically?

RF: Lester Young needed to know the lyrics before he could play a solo but my thing is not so similar. With Lester Young, he took a lot of creative reactions to the subject matter. There's many ways to express "I love you" instrumentally, maybe a trillion ways, from an understanding of what I love you means. It's very different when you're extracting information from learning the lyrics to a song and using that knowledge in your solo. Sometimes this can get in the way of what you want to do. For me, I've never liked to learn the lyrics, and that goes back to when I was a kid. I could never understand the lyrics of popular songs. The Temptations would be singing or Otis Redding and you could never understand what they were saying. Did you ever feel this way? "I Heard it Through the Grapevine," did you understand all those lyrics? See, and because I couldn't understand everything, I discounted them when I became a professional musician. Maybe my speaker on the radio was not good, back then you couldn't afford a big stereo so it was on a tiny transistor radio. It was different for Lester Young, when he went into the studio he had the printed lyrics. It was different from listening to stuff on the radio at 7-years-old. When I became a musician I thought, 'Oh man, I'm not gonna be bothered with this.' Plus we have other examples of how to be a creative musician. We have Joe Henderson and Wayne Shorter. These guys are playing their own music, they're not sitting up there learning lyrics and playing a tune. No, they're writing their own music. I want to write my own music and go that way, and going that way, there's no lyrics, or I'm gonna play a song and maybe the lyrics are gonna get in the way of what I want to create. This is another valid way to think about playing music. Today if you want to play the saxophone, you don't have to learn the lyrics, just pick up the horn and blow. Maybe the lyrics aren't good or as interesting as the melody.

Cadence: As a youth, you had close exposure to musicians through your father who was friends with artists including Johnny Hodges and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. How did your father befriend them and did those early interactions further or inspire your career?

RF: My father was always close to Jazz, he used to work at Storyville. My mother was working there too. One time they took me to Storyville and Dinah Washington gave me a hug and a kiss. She was doing a soundcheck while pressing her clothes at the same time on the stage. [Laughs] And she said, "Oh, it's a little baby," and she gave me a big hug. And my grandmother played guitar with the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. She was one of the original New York members and taught the other guitarists how to read the book, and she had a 3 minute dance routine with a tap dancing duo at the Apollo Theater. My father always wanted to be a musician, although he never became one, but he always went out of his way to expose me and my brother to it. I saw Roland Kirk at a Jazz festival and I was backstage there

with Frank Zappa and Max Roach, and this day I said, 'I want to play the saxophone.' After hearing Rahsaan, it really cemented to me that I had to be a musician. I was almost 14-years-old then. My father got me a saxophone for my fourteenth birthday. My birthday is March 4 and this day is the worst week to be born because around that day, your report card comes out from school, and sometimes my report card wasn't so favorable. [Laughs] And this year, it wasn't that favorable and my father said, "Damn! Where's that horn?" And he put the horn under his bed and said, "You don't touch this horn until your next report card." I used to come home and sometimes I'd go into his room, take out the horn, and look at it. [Laughs] I'd look at it for two minutes and say, 'Damn!' I never played it but I'd look at that bad boy and say, 'Don't you worry!' It was funny. Can you imagine that, horn under the bed for three months? Of course, the next report card was better and I was able to start playing.

Cadence: In John Kruth's book Bright Moments [Welcome Rain], he documents a remarkable observation from a Boston party that you attended at the age of 16 where you received an impromptu lesson from Rahsaan Roland Kirk. You stood behind Kirk, watching his fingers flickering on the brass pads, while he played a passage. Sharing the same horn, you reached from behind Kirk and repeated the same passage while he blew through the horn. Do you remember that?

RF: Yeah, I remember doing that, it was my horn. And then maybe a year later, I woke up circular breathing. I woke up and said, 'Damn! I know how to circular breathe.' Rahsaan was in town that day so I practiced for one hour circular breathing and I went and sat in with Rahsaan Roland Kirk. He let me sit in on the last tune. Normally you don't play on the gig with him but he let me come up. We get to the last note and he's circular breathing so I just coat-tailed. I grabbed onto his coattails and I started circular breathing. One minute goes by – two minutes go by – maybe three minutes, and then he starts rocking. You know what that means – you better take the horn outta your mouth! [Laughs] Something said – "Ricky! Take the horn outta your mouth!" I took it out and he said, "Ah, it's a good thing you stopped blowing that horn because we'd be here till 5 o'clock in the morning!" And everybody just cut up, man. It was so funny. And backstage the guys said, "Hey Ricky, why'd you do that shit? We're trying to take a break, man. Shit!"

Cadence: Are you saying that you woke up and suddenly had the ability to circular breathe?

RF: Yeah, I just woke up. I must have been thinking about it before I went to bed.

Cadence: Do you see that as some sort of spiritual happening?

RF: You know, sometimes you get up and you might blow some air out with your cheeks puffed up? This is one time that I was breathing in at the time and I realized I could circular breathe. It was like for a little, teeny second that I experienced how it was done.

Cadence: One thing that's very apparent from speaking with other musicians

is how impressive a player you were from a very early age. What do you attribute your innate ability to?

RF: My environment. I grew up in Boston with Jazz clubs, a good peer group, and good educators around me. All of these things helped. I had a gig and Terri Lyne Carrington used to come down and sit in with us when she was 12-years-old. These things are important. If she wasn't able to play with us, maybe she would never have become a musician. If I hadn't been able to go to clubs and play, maybe I wouldn't be a musician. It's all connected – community and parents investing themselves in you to be a musician is very important. Hiding the saxophone under the bed was very important. My grandmother played music. How many people's grandmother played "Body and Soul?" She called out every single chord and I'm not even sure if I could tell you all the chords right now. [Laughs]

Cadence: Entering the New England Conservatory of Music in 1971, you studied under legendary teachers including Gunther Schuller, Ran Blake, Jaki Byard, George Russell, Joe Allard and Joe Maneri. What stands out from those years of training?

RF: I'm one of the first generation of people to be taught in schools. When I went to the conservatory they were just launching their Jazz department with Jaki Byard, George Russell. I studied with Joe Allard who was the principal teacher for Michael Brecker, Dave Liebman, Steve Grossman. We all studied with the same teacher. I had a very lucky chance to study with Joe Allard. I mean he taught me so many things that I still do after all these years. He was very much connected to the Jazz scene as well as the classical scene. When you hear this record, I owe a lot of the sound to Joe Allard, but I also owe a lot to George Russell and to Jaki Byard. Music today is really more anchored into experience. It's not a physically based medium. I consider myself sort of like a Glenn Gould. Glenn Gould was concertizing all over the world and all of a sudden he decided not to concertize anymore. He decided to stay in one place and make some records when he felt like it. I've been Glenn Gould-ized for a long time. [Laughs] When you really think about it, if something is good for somebody like Glenn Gould, it has to be a good situation for anybody that's made the decision to not be a physically based musician but still be a highly active musician. It's a mystery but it can be demystified if you keep your focus on what you want to do as a musician. It's not just concertizing, it's not making fifty thousand dollars a night. Most of these things are distractions for the true point of being a musician. I think I've demonstrated that on this latest CD. I think it's very special to show that while I haven't been physically around, I'm still able to bring something to the table that's interesting. Joseph Maneri was a very good theory teacher too. We used to sing Bach chorales every day and analyze them for the three years I took his class. He was very steeped into the Schoenberg theory book on harmony. Maneri was a great composer and he wrote a harmony book based on what he taught his students. I used to have an art gallery and you learn things from the people you're exposed to. I had a

couple of artists from CoBrA [a European avant-garde movement active from 1948 to 1951] in my gallery who created art dealing with how you did art work when you were a child. Their artwork was abstract but sometimes they would bring in some figurative art that they did. They made it a point to say, "Listen, if you cannot do figurative art, you cannot do abstract art. If you don't master figurative art, you can never be an abstract artist." And that is going back to Schoenberg. Schoenberg became an atonalist, and in order to be an atonalist, he had to fully master the concept of harmony, and this same concept exists in art. If you have not mastered figurative, you cannot be abstract. It goes back to this whole thing about being a multi-stylist. No one ever disparaged Schoenberg and said that he hindered his career by becoming an atonalist, and the only people that benefited from his stylistic exploration are people like me, that studied and appreciated his atonal compositions. This is what I understood from studying with Joe Maneri. He put us right there – harmony – atonalism, harmony – microtonalism. He even went into Middle Eastern music. The crux of this is if you cannot do A, you cannot do B. This is part of my personal experience in music. With Jaki Byard, you must be able to play all styles. If you play all styles, you'll make more record dates. Everybody's gonna call you because you can do everything. Most of the great studio musicians could do everything.

Cadence: Would you explain how you failed George Russell's class? That's especially interesting because he would later have you play on his 1978 New York Big Band [Soul Note] recording.

RF: I don't know, I think I was so preoccupied with playing the saxophone that I didn't do all of the assignments. For me, a student of my stature, to not do George Russell's assignments, I was merited to fail out of all the other students. He told me, "You should be able to do the assignments. Out of all of my students, you're the only one who is going to have the distinction of failing." I understood it very clearly and this failure was a symbolic pass, psychologically. Because of this, I failed but it was very hard to fail his class because it was required to graduate. I still graduated, but I'm not going to go into all the reasons why I graduated, but what I am going to talk to you about is that in 1999 I made a record called Balaena with a song called "Blues Work" which used a D minor 7 and A flat 13 and A flat 7. George Cables, who was on the record, said, "Ricky, don't you want to play straight A flat 6 instead of A flat 7?" I said, 'No, A flat 13 is good.' This is George Russell, his whole thing about the Lydian Chromatic Concept is understanding the tritone, and D minor and A flat is a tritone, and I made this into a Blues. Later, there was a big 80th anniversary celebration of George Russell in 2004 and I sat next to him at the soundcheck. I told him, 'I wrote this tune, man, using D minor and A flat 7 in the Blues.' You know what he tells me? "Ah, it looks like you read chapter 25 in my new book." His new book was not out in 1999, but all those years later, all those things I studied with George Russell, were coming through my music. To do that on a Blues was very important because the Blues is fundamental to Jazz expression.

It's a very beautiful story regarding my relationship with George Russell. For him to be able to tell me that, he was so cool he was not cool. To make a joke out of it – "It looks like you read chapter 25 in my new book." I went to MIT to do a workshop with Mark Harvey's class and I went to the library there to look at his new book and there's no chapter 25 in it. D minor, A flat 7 was not there, it never did make it into his book. So I realized he'd been happy for me to take the time to tell him that, after all of those years? When I realized what I had composed, I was very humbled. 'Wow, that's George Russell!' It came out in a very good way in this Blues and it was totally connected to him. I studied with George Russell, not influenced, studied, and after all of those years I was able to realize what I studied in a very meaningful way, just like Art Farmer, just like Miles Davis, just like Eric Dolphy, in a record date in a professional situation. Boom! Right there! No problems, it was clear, and this is a good context for the Lydian Chromatic Concept. If we ever think about these concepts outside of professionalism and more in academia it would be important. Maybe some students will read this interview and understand something that I'm trying to say about music and your life, and what you should expect from music, and what you shouldn't take for granted about the power of music. It's something that you do for all of your life, and if you really understand what you're studying, these things are going to help you throughout your entire life as a musician. It's really important and I was really lucky to study with George.

Cadence: What do you mean when you say it was a symbolic pass in regard to you failing Russell's class?

RF: [Pauses] It was a symbolic pass, but I failed. [Laughs] Sometimes he'd come to my gig when I was working with Ran Blake, sit at the bar and say, "Yeah Ricky, you're the only motherfucker I ever flunked in my life!" We laughed about this shit. For him, it was symbolic, and for me, in retrospect, it was symbolic. He was trying to make the point that if anyone needed to understand about the Lydian Chromatic Concept, it was me. This is the point that he was trying to make. "You need to understand this. I don't care if it takes you twenty fucking years, one day you're gonna come home with the bread!" [Laughs] He never let me forget it.

Cadence: You also mentioned the power of music. Are you referring to the power of music as it relates to the musician or the listener?

RF: I'm talking to you about the point of view from a practicing musician who understands music. It has a tremendous power for you to be creative but it really depends on who you're studying with, why you're studying, why you want to be a musician, and your convictions of being a musician. These things are all intertwined and they generate a certain amount of synergy within your psyche as a musician. If you really retain what you studied as a student and make what you did as a student make sense to you as a professional, you have to decide what you want to do with your music despite anything else that happens into your life. If you want to make forty thousand dollars a day, or if you don't want to make that, none of that matters to the point of what you're

doing as a musician. That doesn't matter. The more important thing is that you're able to appreciate what you did in the past as a student and you get to make it come out into your music at some point. This is a very serious thing. If an engineer doesn't study well, the bridge is gonna fall down. Students have to be very serious about what they're doing as a musician and have a certain amount of humility and to become the best that they can as a musician in order to contribute to the music world in some type of way. It's not about doing interviews and being on the cover of a magazine. It has nothing to do with that, although that's important to disseminate information but you're not gonna get to that point if you don't really think about what you're doing. I was very lucky, I was born at a certain time where there were a lot of musicians still alive that you could hear and talk to. Today it's a different day. Maybe in thirty years, some young musician is going to be able to appreciate what I appreciated when I was younger.

Cadence: As a young saxophonist you purposely resisted the standard trend of absorbing the teachings of John Coltrane, choosing instead to focus on Sonny Rollins and Dexter Gordon's work. Why did you make that choice?

RF: Because a lot of guys were already playing like Coltrane. I worked with Sonny Rollins for one week and that might have had something to do with it. I knew his music, I studied his records. When Dexter came back to America, that was an influence. Being a stylist, you do things to pay homage to your elders. You can do a quote while you're playing that maybe somebody else wouldn't waste their time doing, as opposed to just playing yourself, but you're never really going to sound like someone else, you're always gonna sound like yourself. But again, cats are gonna write about it – "Oh, he sounds like Dexter," and it's really not true. I don't sound like these guys. For some reason, it's written about so it's a good question. The reality is somewhere else.

Cadence: Sonny Rollins continued to help guide you throughout your career. You've said in the past that, "Every time I do something big in my life, I call Sonny Rollins," and that has included getting married and moving to France.

RF: It's true. I told him I was gonna go with Mingus and one day after I had been playing with him, out of the blue, Charles Mingus blurts out in the dressing room – "Ah, Sonny told me that you called him!" Everybody laughed and I couldn't say anything. Sonny had called him, and I don't know what they talked about, but he knew that I had asked Sonny about him.

Cadence: Would you say something about the camaraderie you've had with the older musicians?

RF: Before I moved to France, Stan Getz used to come hear me play when I was in New York. He loved my playing. That really impressed me. We were friends. I went to hear him play with Kenny Barron on one of his last tours in France and Stan looked at me and said, "Hey Rocky, I heard you moved to France!" I thought, 'How does he know I moved to France?' At those times, the older musicians were always talking about what the young guys were doing.

Cadence: Stan Getz called you Rocky? Is that your nickname?

RF: He called me Rocky because my marriage was on the rocks. [Laughs] "Hey Rocky!" That cat was really fucking funny.

Cadence: Your second album Manhattan Plaza [1979, Muse] is named after the still existing New York City high-rise complex that you lived in during the late '70s which housed dancers, writers, visual artists and musicians such as Muhal Richard Abrams, Amina Claudine Myers, George Lewis, Anthony Davis, Walter Bishop, Jr. and Frank Lowe. What kind of activities were going on inside the complex and how did that influence your growth?

RF: We used to all get together especially if somebody had a gig, we'd go and rehearse together. I used to rehearse with all of them. I told Mingus about the plaza. I told Jack Walrath and Dexter Gordon, and they all moved there too. I remember swimming together with Dexter and Walter Bishop, Jr. and then going into the sauna with them and Dexter sweating so much in the sauna with the rest of us. We were a big happy family. Russell Procope [alto sax, clarinet] and Laurence Lucy [guitar] both used to play with Fletcher Henderson and they were my neighbors. They used to hang out on the corner all the time. It was a great place to live. I still have family living there and one of my grandsons is playing alto saxophone now. He sounds like Lester Young on the alto. Every time I go back, I go and see everyone from time to time and I go to visit Jack and see Amina.

Cadence: As a youth, you saw Duke Ellington's Orchestra perform many times. You joined the band in 1974, just a few months after the passing of Duke Ellington and Paul Gonsalves. Did you have any trepidation over accepting Mercer Ellington's offer to take over Paul Gonsalves' seat in the orchestra upon graduating New England Conservatory?

RF: There was not one ounce of trepidation there. I was so happy to be offered to play in that band. I had listened to so many Duke Ellington records and had done so much research about this orchestra, to be asked to go there upon the horrible situation of Duke Ellington passing away and Paul Gonsalves, it was like a call to arms. You have to go and apply yourself, as best as you can. Have you heard of this guy [Karl] Wallenda [the famous tightrope walker]? He didn't have any trepidation. If you're working on top of the Empire State Building, you can't have any trepidation! You're a professional.

Cadence: Did you have to earn the respect of the veterans in that high profile orchestra? How did they respond to a young hotshot taking over Gonsalves' spot?

RF: Oh, they loved it, it was total family. There was no proving. If you go into that band trying to prove something, it's not gonna happen at all. You already proved something, if you didn't prove something you wouldn't be there. [Laughs] When I joined Mercer Ellington, they knew I was from Boston and they knew Harry Carney was from Boston and Paul Gonsalves was from New Bedford. Johnny Hodges grew up with my father and was from Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was like I was a perfect fit for the band because I was from Boston, and playing the tenor saxophone everything came together, plus I had

met Duke Ellington the year before he passed away at [Boston's] Elma Lewis Playhouses in the Park.

Cadence: As an insider in the orchestra, did you hear stories about Duke Ellington that surprised you?

RF: [Exhales] If I were to tell you all of those stories I don't know if it would be too cool. [Laughs] It was all positive. I was a young guy back then. I was 21-years-old, on the road. Sometimes things would happen, just use your imagination! [Laughs] No, nobody talked about Duke that way except for once in a while and you'd be surprised.

Cadence: Would you share a memory of Harry Carney from your time with him in the Ellington Orchestra?

RF: I sat in his seat when I got on the bus and nobody said anything. He got on the bus and said, "Young man, your seat is over here." I said, 'How come nobody told me I was sitting in Harry's seat?' Everybody looked down. If you messed up, it was like that, nobody would say anything about it. He had been in the band for 48 years and at one point he told me, "Young man, if you ever think you're going to get in trouble, keep that horn in your mouth," which is something very beautiful to say. Harry ended up passing away. He lost a lot of weight but nobody knew he was sick. God bless his soul. Because of him I joined the band and he passed away. They put Percy Marion into his seat and I took Paul's. Percy went to Berkely and used to sit in on my gigs and we'd do jam sessions together. He got to Duke before me. After I left the band for Mingus, they found Percy drowned in a pool. He was a giant athlete, he knew how to swim. I don't know what happened to him. I dedicated my first CD to him, poor guy. That's some of the drama of being in big bands, sometimes shit happens.

Cadence: Charles Mingus "stole" you out of the Duke Ellington Orchestra and you spent two years as a member of his last working band. What most surprised you about Mingus after spending time with him?

RF: RF: Me and Mingus, we loved each other. I knew him even before I joined his band. We used to hang out in Boston, we were old buddies. [Laughs] Nobody could understand that – "Where did Ricky Ford come from? What is up with these two guys?" When I got to his band, we already had a big past and I knew how to deal with his music. That was sort of a funny situation sometimes. He used to play this tune "Cherokee" a lot and one time we were in Montmartre and we had to play that song which dealt with the whole thing about the genocide that happened with the native Indians in America. I thought, 'Why is he playing "Cherokee?"' I could never get it, we had to think about this every night. It was part of a break tune called "Ko Ko" which Charles Parker composed in 1945, just around the time of the partition of Korea. Hence, the "Cherokee" changes were incorporated into the solo section and Mingus chose to intensify the song by adding the actual melody. One night, Dexter was out there, a lot of people were in the club, and we get to "Cherokee" and I asserted myself. I played the melody three times faster than it was

supposed to be played and real loud. And the only thing they could do was follow me. So Jack Walrath went, "Ahhh." These cats had to catch up to me. Mingus told me, "You're fired motherfucker!" He was pissed because he had to play it real fucking fast and I didn't give a shit. That was funny, I was just tired of that break tune. Of course, we still played it some nights but not as much. It wasn't wrong to play it like that – Mercer Ellington used to say, "If you're gonna play something wrong, play it loud and wrong. That way it's not gonna sound like a mistake."

Cadence: Mingus fired you a number of times. How did he go about rehiring you?

RF: Oh, the next morning he'd… You know I made my first album Loxodonta Africana with Dannie Richmond and I remember I had the cassette and I played it on the bus for the band to hear while Mingus was sitting next to me across the aisle. We should have played some of my music in the band, I don't know why we didn't. I never had the nerve to ask Mingus to play these songs when I was in the band. Once in Italy, we went to a restaurant and I was so happy about my new album that I got drunk and I started to talk too much. And the more I talked, the less Mingus talked. I don't know what I was talking about and the restaurant kept serving us chianti and calamari, which we kept eating and drinking. We ate and drank for over three hours. The chef's wife was there and very pregnant, she looked like she was gonna have a baby the very next day. And I took a glass with chianti in it and said, 'Here's to your son!' And the chef was so flattered that I made a toast to his baby but Mingus was so pissed. "Oh, now you're gonna predict that they're going to have a son? Fuck you! Man, you pay for your own lunch!" [Laughs] Dannie whispered to me, "Ricky, shut the fuck up!" That was so funny. He was upset only because he couldn't think to say it. Two or three days later, Mingus and I bought some chianti together and he said, "Ricky, you've got your bottle, I've got my bottle of chianti, when we get back to New York we're gonna drink these bottles together." I said that was a good idea and I put my bottle in my suitcase very badly and it broke, so we drank his bottle when we got back to New York. It was like that for us.

Cadence: You were close with Mingus so it had to be difficult to watch him dwindle and die in January of 1979 due to ALS.

RF: All of this stuff happened and we didn't realize it was happening. I played with him at the Great American Music Hall [in San Francisco], I believe the day before he went to Arizona. I was playing a solo and Mingus yelled, "Don't play that shit again!" And two thousand people busted out laughing because he said it so loud. I was playing something I had played the night before to make people clap. Mingus didn't like the whole concept of playing learned solos over and over again, going back to the days of Coleman Hawkins, Lionel Hampton, Chu Berry and Illinois Jacquet. He thought this was the great demise of Jazz because many people don't know that these solos were preplanned. That was a big issue for him – "Always be creative. Never try to figure out your solos."

Of course, he said that and then he'd play "Meditations On Integration" and he'd play [a written out part]. [Laughs] He was kind of guilty when playing the melody because he could have done something else but I'm mostly kidding here. No, he never played the same thing although, because he was getting sick, there were some things that were a little too hard for him to do and then one day, he got to Arizona and said he couldn't play and nobody knew why. Nobody knew why he couldn't play anymore, he just said he was tired, and then all of a sudden he couldn't play any of the songs in the book. Everything just closed down with communication. He canceled the Arizona gig. And sadly, at the very end of his life, he requested for us to go see him. Dannie Richmond, who was living with me at the time, we went along with Jack Walrath to see him in his room while his helper was taking care of him in his hospital bed. He had no clothes on and he was skinny. She was changing his diaper and he told us goodbye. We all told him we loved him and he told us he loved us. That was the last time we saw him. It was a hard thing to take but… Even at that point, we still had hope that he was going to survive. The day we got the news that he had passed away was devastating. Dannie cried like a baby, I don't think you ever get over that. We tried to put his old band together. I did the best I could for Dannie. I let him stay at my house and he was my roommate for several months. I was single back then and I didn't have a family so I was able to do that for him. That's a sad story, Dannie didn't survive that much longer after that.

Cadence: Would you share another Mingus memory?

RF: We were in Argentina and I was writing music for my upcoming first record date and I bought this hard cover music book. We were in the plane and Mingus was sitting next to me and I was writing some music in the book – "Blues Peru" and "Aerolinos." "Blues Peru" had these half note triplets and Mingus used half note triplets a lot in his music. I'm writing music but he thinks that I'm drawing his profile and he starts posing for a few minutes. Finally, he's so curious about what I'm doing that he gets up and sees that I'm writing music, and he sees the half note triplets. "Hey motherfucker, why you stealing my half note triplets?" [Laughs] [Later on] when we were going to Italy, and he heard my record and he heard those half note triplets, he was burning. [Laughs] He made me put all of the music in his publishing company. He said, "Yeah man, when you become famous I'm gonna make some money." [Laughs] The sad part about it is that the Mingus Dynasty never played these songs, and they should have, they're great tunes. It's a classic story, man. Your master is sitting next to you and you appoint yourself to write music next to him, and you know these half note triplets… It's the silliest thing, it was beautiful. It's like you sitting next to Beethoven and you write a sonata and he looks at it and says, "Hey man, you just stole all my shit!" What's so funny about it is that I recorded this stuff and he knew that I wrote it on the airplane with no piano, no nothing, just poof! All of this has to do with studying composition – Schoenberg and all of the harmony lessons and Jaki Byard. This

was only five years after I got out of school. Mingus said, "You're doing this but you only have this record date because you're working with me." Gunther Schuller wanted me to go to the studio and improvise but I wasn't going to do that, I was going to write some music.

Cadence: It's significant that your career started in the bands of two of America's greatest composers – Ellington and Mingus. How did their work enrich your approach to composition?

RF: Well, you try not to copy anybody. You're taught to be your own man. Basically, I was too young to go into all of that [with the Ellington band]. I was more observing and listening, but of course, by the time I got to Mingus, it was a different story. I was able to appreciate the things he was doing with his music with the half note triplets and incorporate these things. Like what happened with George Russell, thirty to forty years later. The influences weren't clear cut and dry so I can't tell you how they influenced me. Somebody else might be able to say that [about my music] but I can't because there was too much going on. With Mingus, I could say I stole his half note triplets, true, he realized this and he made me put my music in his publishing company. That was clear business stuff. Lionel Hampton was a little bit different. I wrote "Interpretations" and Lionel Hampton wanted me to call it "Hamp's Stamp" and to have him take credit for this song. I told him that it was already recorded as "Interpretations" and that I couldn't do that. So he just let it go, but he asked. With Stan Getz, you record a song with Stan Getz, he takes your royalties and publishes your song. So this is known business stuff.

Cadence: You've retained an interest in big bands. You've been involved with a number of them including the Ze Big Band. What attracts you to large ensemble play?

RF: I had experience in academia doing large ensembles for many years so it's just a natural gravitation to want to continue this type of thing. In France I did two CDs, 7095 and the Sacred Concert. In 1999 I composed the Sacred Concert. Dr. James Roland Braithwaite was a very well-known musicologist and organist at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Central Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts, who grew up with my father in Cambridge. He gave all of the reference material for me to write my Sacred Concert and I'm very grateful to him. When I recorded that, I was one of the first musicians to ever play inside the rectory of the church with a big band. It's a very important record. The Ze Big Band has since been disbanded.

Cadence: Following Mingus, who refused to compromise his integrity by grandstanding, you spent a few years with Lionel Hampton, a master entertainer who received criticism in the press for playing to the audience. Was it challenging to acclimate to Hampton's audience friendly style after Mingus' no-nonsense approach?

RF: The thing about Hamp was that I really wanted to see first hand how a musician like him, especially as a soloist, was soloing, and I took the gig only for that. Plus, he was working and he wanted me in the band. He said, "Oh,

Ricky, you're so strong, you could front a band like mine. I need you in the band." I wrote some charts for the band, I did some observation, I traveled a lot, and Lionel Hampton was a great guy to work for. We would do a 3-hour soundcheck and do a 4-hour gig every day. I mean it wasn't no bullshit. And when I wrote "Interpretations" for him, he would practice the bridge every day. He said my music was the bebop of the '80s. Who could really say that but him, he was really there with Coleman Hawkins and everybody. We had a good time together.

Cadence: There's plenty of reports that Hampton's wife, who controlled the finances, wasn't always fair with paying the band.

RF: I was a big star back then, I was in demand and people couldn't push me around. How many people can say that they want to join a band just to observe? Sonny Rollins was surprised I went with Lionel Hampton. "Oh, you're gonna go with Lionel Hampton? [Cries]" I said to myself, 'I guess I fucked up this time, shit!'

Cadence: Your recording debut as a leader came in 1977 with the release of Loxodonta Africana. Loxodonta refers to the genus of African elephants. Why did you choose that title?

RF: It was kind of like a time capsule title, an artifact title. What's gonna happen to the elephants in forty years? They're almost extinct now. I did a similar album with the whales called Balaena. Also, the Rockefeller Foundation funded the record so there was the Republican [angle] but that was totally subconscious. [Laughs] The real thing was the African elephants. I had a Romare Bearden collage on the cover. I love his work and I wanted to have some really quality art work on my album. I was disappointed when they put out a new CD of Loxodonta Africana and they don't have the Romare Bearden on the cover anymore.

Cadence: In 1994 you recorded Tenors of Yusef Lateef and Ricky Ford [YAL]. Talk about creating music with Yusef Lateef?

RF: That was kind of funny because he and Archie Shepp came to hear me play with my octet with Pete LaRoca at UMass. I don't know what happened but I didn't feel too comfortable, maybe my horn needed repair. I don't remember but I couldn't really feel very well about my playing. Afterwards, Yusef came backstage and asked me if I wanted to make a record with him. I said yes and I was very surprised. He picked me up a few weeks later and he wrote out four or five notes for each song – "Brother Moody," "Brother Henderson," "Brother Rollins." He said, "Yeah Ricky, you're like a sponge, you absorb a lot of information so I'm not writing too much music, we're just gonna play off each other." And that's how the record went because he had already rehearsed the rhythm section.

Cadence: Teaching has played an important role for you. You taught at Istanbul Bilgi University from 2000 -2006. What was the level of interest in Jazz music and the quality of jazz musicianship in Turkey at the time you began teaching there?

RF: Turkey has a tremendous patrimony in music. It's one of the few countries on Earth that has the most diverse amount of musical instruments made by luthiers. Ahmet Ertegun was Turkish, he founded Atlantic Records, so the students already had a giant appreciation for the heritage of the music because they knew that somebody from Turkey was very much responsible for a lot of the music that was produced in Jazz. They had a great appreciation for music in general and were very highly motivated to make their lives in music. Ninety-nine percent of all of our students are still musicians today and they're very happy to play music. Maybe seven of them have had Fulbright Fellowships to study in America. I formed a big band there and afterward I formed a five saxophone group with a rhythm section. We did a lot of great things there. I used to rehearse with my students almost every day. This started because I used to go to the school and practice for three hours before my classes, so I would always get there at seven o'clock and practice in my office until ten o'clock. Everybody would come to school and hear me practicing and students started coming to school early, and all of a sudden they said, "Hey man, why don't we just start rehearsing at eight o'clock? That's when I started my saxophone group and everyday we'd rehearse for two hours before class. The other professors said, "How did Ricky do this? How did he get all the students to come in early to practice?" I remember having tea in the morning and then we'd practice for two hours. It was beautiful, after we practiced, everybody was cool to do their class – no stress, totally motivated. We did that for three years. One thing that I regret is that I wasn't able to keep teaching in America, and even the teaching I did there was outside of the mainstream because I was just directing a big band. Sometimes I would have students but it wasn't really concentrated in a big music department where I had access to students that were very serious about studying music. I've always understood the value of music education from what I learned as a musician from Joe Allard, George Russell and Jaki Byard. And it's not just technical, living in New York as a professional, if you're open enough, you're going to learn things from your experiences. When I was with Mercer Ellington, Cootie Williams used to always give me a ton of advice. Harry Carney too. He told me, "Young man, if you ever think you're going to get in trouble, just keep that horn in your mouth." That's giant knowledge right there! How to keep focused on music. You need to direct yourself into your music. From Cootie Williams, I learned about placing your solos, plus his whole life experience, what he went through as a musician. If you understand these things, it's not bad to take a back seat and to concentrate on your music. It's not just all seats in the club. There're so many other things that a musician can do to be a total musician and to be happy with his music and not worry about being on the cover of magazines. I've played all over the world. I did 48 weeks on the Ellington bus.

Cadence: While living in Turkey you had the opportunity to explore their unique musical concepts and the works of Turkish poet and musician Neyzen Tevfik. What strikes you about his work?

RF: It's very free, he had the reputation of being the consummate improvisor. He had a lot of problems in his life, he was very political. He wrote a lot of poetry, he was exiled from Turkey a couple of times and he was exiled from Egypt. His life wasn't easy but he was one of the first ney [end-blown flute] players to record for RCA in the 1900s, 1910. I did a big study about his music, I invested myself a lot, not only into his music, but studying the ney and Turkish music.

Cadence: Do you still play the ney?

RF: Yes, sometimes, but after all of that, I couldn't play the ney too much because I invested so much into playing the saxophone that I couldn't do both. It changed the embouchure too much. I realized that I had invested so much into playing the saxophone that it didn't make sense to play something else, so I had to make a choice. I studied the ney's music but I had to even not bother with that too much because you have to be very careful with repetitive movement with your fingers. Repetitive movement is very dangerous, especially on the saxophone. If you spend most of your career not doing it, it's not advisable to start to do it late career. So, I did it very limitedly. There's one tune on my new CD called "Fer" that addresses a lot of what I understood from these studies.

Cadence: How's your Turkish and how many languages do you speak with some degree of fluency?

RF: I only speak a few words. It was an English speaking university so I didn't get a chance to study Turkish too much. I speak French, English and baby talk. [Laughs]

Cadence: After your tenure at Istanbul Bilgi University, you lived in (to see) Toucy, a town in the Bourgogne region of France, south of Paris, where you very actively built a creative arts scene and founded the Toucy Jazz Festival in 2008. What was your vision for the festival? Did it differ from others across France and Europe?

RF: Some people say that it was a very nice festival. It was a small festival and we had quality artists there. It was a very challenging period to produce festivals. We did it for a few years and then we stopped in 2018 for various issues. It's always a thing with public funding. You have help for a certain amount of years and then after that they think that you're established and that you don't need funding anymore. So when the funding became less and less, it became more difficult to do quality productions. I just decided not to do it anymore and that was that. I closed down my art gallery too and got out of the business of doing art work and just concentrated on playing the saxophone and taking care of my family.

Cadence: You mentioned the art gallery [Galerie 14] you opened while living in Toucy to sell your paintings as well as others. How did you come to start painting and running an art gallery?

RF: It's something I always wanted to do and after living in Turkey I decided to do it because I had some artist friends there in Toucy that let me have their

artwork to do my first exhibition and I just went from there.

Cadence: So you're no longer painting?

RF: No, but I should start to do it again. When I had the gallery, I made an objective for myself to do an exhibition every year. That was the really big motivation for doing it because I already had the space and only had to produce the work.

Cadence: Have you found music or art work to be more satisfying for you to create?

RF: [Pauses] I think creating music is more satisfying than creating art. But [there were issues], there was always a jealousy. The saxophone would be jealous because I was painting, and when I wasn't painting, the paintings would be jealous because I was playing saxophone. These things were happening too

Cadence: What did you find to be more profitable – art or music?

RF: I'm not gonna answer that question. [Laughs]

Cadence: You were involved in the filming and photo shoot of "A Great Day in Paris" that took place in Montmartre in 2008 and featured 100 musicians. That was inspired by Art Kane's famous Harlem photo from 1958. Why did you do the shoot and how did you decide which musicians to include?

RF: I made a basic list of who to call, it was mostly expatriate musicians from America. Word got around and a lot of musicians from France came too. I think a lot of it had to do with me having an art gallery and doing something entrepreneurial and curating something. Everything was stemming from my curatorial impulse.

Cadence: Now that you're back to living in Paris, what's an average day like for you in the City of Lights?

RF: Right now I'm doing a lot of research on the saxophone. I'm doing a tremendous amount of research about the evolution of the saxophone and why saxophones sound like they sound. It's mostly a personal study, it might never be published, but I've come across some very interesting things. It's really enlightening to be able to take the time to not think about music but to think about the mechanics of what has made the music and why the music is like it is, and I'm only talking about saxophone, not other music. This is a revolutionary study that is very fascinating to understand and ties in a lot of questions about why the saxophone sounds the way it sounds and what are the tendencies in an industry that sometimes doesn't want to change what they do. Living in France, I have the time to think about these things. I'm not curating art anymore but I'm doing a new type of curation that has something clearly to do with the saxophone. At some point, I'll be able to more clearly articulate this and when you listen to my new CD, you could hear something. A lot of it is addressed in this CD.

Cadence: What are your interests outside of music and painting? What are your guilty pleasures?

RF: Cooking and taking care of my house – although those two are not

compatible. [Laughs] My guilty pleasure would be having a chocolate bar sometimes. I don't watch too much TV, I used to but since I got more into research about the saxophone, it's taken up my time. I stopped going to movies after Jaws came out. I just didn't want to go anymore, I wait for them to come out on television.

Cadence: Why did you stop going to movies after Jaws? Was it too scary on the big screen?

RF: No, I was in the Edison Hotel and I saw a line going around the block of Broadway and I said, 'I'm never going to a movie again.' [Laughs] That was in 1975.

Cadence: The final questions have been given to me from other artists to ask you:

Ben Sidran (piano) asked: "How has your interest in art influenced the shape of your playing?"

RF: Every time you pick up the saxophone, it's like starting from point one, and at point one, I wasn't into art. But I did [significant] research about colors and notes. It's like ear training, if you can ascribe a color to a sound – whenever you see this color, you imagine the sound, and the sound is correlating to the fingering on the saxophone. It's sort of practicing just by looking at colors. I've been into this synthesis a lot for quite a few years now, especially since I started my art gallery, and it's really helped me to think about music. Probably one of the most important things that I understood from painting is this whole concept of synthesis.

Cadence: Would you touch on your painting style and influences?

RF: My paintings are mostly based on Australian Aboriginal concepts. It's from an impulse I had to go into this type of artwork and to do it on my own. I feel when you're doing a painting you should always have you somewhere in the painting. Sometimes I do a painting after a little bit of meditation and it turns into an auto-construction type of painting. Those are some of the concepts I use along with synthesis and a lot of music paintings which are based on musical rhythms and codifications of musical patterns.

Jack Walrath (trumpet) said: "I've run into you in Europe at times. One time while I was playing with some gypsies while you were teaching in Istanbul and another time we met up in Portugal and a girl came in the dressing room and sang some Fado. I know you've been living in Europe and you've been to so many places, you're pretty hard core, I want to know if hearing all the different music has influenced you in any way? I know when I go to different countries, I'll come back and write some music using the new influence. I wonder how much of that different music has sunk in with you?"

RF: Quite a bit, it just takes time to do an exact take on the influence. I'm not gonna do something based on what I heard yesterday. I've been over here so long and most of my really good exposure to different types of music happened when I was teaching in Istanbul, it's not like I'm gonna go out and listen to different types of music in Paris. The music in Istanbul was something new to

me so I really absorbed more of it through my living there. That really helped me to understand it.

Jack Walrath also recalled: "We worked together with Mingus and I remember you actually wrote an arrangement or at least an introduction for "Farewell, Farewell" but Paul Jeffrey took it away from you and put his own name on it."

RF: That's not true because when Sue [Mingus] published "Farewell, Farewell", there's no eight bar intro, it's not there. I still have the original copy. You know, you can't even copyright eight bars. Listen, everybody knows that I wrote that. Charles Mingus was so happy to hear that. Larry Coryell was there and he loved it, Jack Walrath was there. Everybody knows that I wrote that intro. Paul, he arranged the octet pieces on Loxodonta Africana, he was a nice guy. I remember Paul saying that he wrote it but it's not true, it's not even published in the Mingus book. My intro was used on the record but it was never published.

Dave Liebman (saxophone) asked: "Hey Bro R - hope you are well. We both played with the great drummer Pete LaRoca. Can you describe what that experience was like?"

RF: I worked with Pete LaRoca with Mal Waldron, plus Pete played in my band with the group that Yusef Lateef heard me in. A couple of times at Sweet Basil I almost stepped on the rim of his bass drum and he was pissed. I loved playing with Pete and the record [Swing Time] that he and I did with Dave Liebman was a very memorable record. It was a privilege to play with Pete LaRoca, and of course, with Dave, too. Pete had a very good drive to his playing. I played a lot with him and Mal Waldron and Reggie Workman after Eddie Moore passed away. That was one of the great things about living in New York, you could always play with really great musicians.

Ran Blake (piano) said: "I'd like to mention that you had remarkable parents. I used to take your mother Ramona out for lunch in Hartford. I don't believe that you actually studied with me, but I know that you could learn lots of stuff by ear. People really worshiped you in Boston, and I have to say that you and Houston Person are my two favorite living tenor saxophone players. I have a personal memory of you. We had a Horn & Hardart's [automat restaurant] my first two years at the conservatory, right across from our building, and a friend brought you over [to the restaurant] and I flipped. And somehow we were able to get you a scholarship so you could study with Jaki Byard."

RF: My best friend, David Johnson, was working at the Horn & Hardart's and he knew Ran because while he was working there, Ran used to come for lunch, and he wanted me to meet Ran because he knew that I was into music. And everything started from there. Ran took me to the conservatory and introduced me to everybody. I'm so grateful to have studied with Ran. He knew my parents, he was close to my mother. He's a very sacred individual. I love Ran, he's a lifelong friend of mine and a mentor. He's helped me so much in my music career, so, so much.

Ran Blake also asked: "I'd like to know what you would do if you could arrange a special dream recording in the future? What would be the repertoire?

Would you do standards or all Ricky Ford originals? Who would appear on it with you?"

RF: My current CD! [Laughs] Barry Altschul, Jerome Harris and Mark Soskin.

Benny Golson (tenor saxophone) said: "Over the ineluctable passing of years, I've felt you have been grossly overlooked as one of our prominent musicians and a most significant part of the metaphoric fabric we lovingly call jazz. My question is what did you emotionally feel as a member of Charlie Mingus' radical thinking?"

RF: I love Mingus and it was really hard to leave Mercer Ellington, but I did. Sadly, Mingus passed away very prematurely and I never did get back with the Ellington orchestra. But Mingus did write great music. He wrote Three or Four Shades of Blue and Cumbia & Jazz Fusion for us, and of course, I stole his half note triplets. There were a lot of things we went through together, and metaphorically, yea, there were some things there. For me to be able to, at that early stage, to think that I could borrow from Charles Mingus, and to do it convincingly, is a special memory. Sometimes with Mingus I was really happy and sometimes there was a little bit of trepidation. [Laughs] But you had to pull out all the stops with Mingus, especially because he was declining in health so we had to work harder for the presentation. We loved Charles Mingus and he loved us too. It was a big family. He would listen to us and he would do his best to do what we asked him to do sometimes. If we asked him to write some music, he would write the music and he would do it in a big way. He was always true to his word. He wasn't the type of cat who would discount what you said and we never discounted what he said either. We were happy together.

Jimmy Cobb (drums) didn't have a question but he had an observation. He said: "I made a couple records with Ricky Ford and I always liked him because he was a young man with a sound like an old man when he played the saxophone. Ricky had a lot of maturity about his playing and he was a funny guy to be around." Would you share something about how it was to be accepted by "the cats" as a young player?

RF: I didn't have any trouble because I was the only guy in New York at that time, there wasn't a big group of younger musicians. I was really honored that Jimmy Cobb would take the time to play with me, along with Walter Booker and John Hicks. Those guys really wanted to work. I remember one time I had a gig and our road manager, Jimmy Cobb and Walter Booker were all sleeping in a van to make the gig. They were really dedicated to working, and at that time there were hard situations to travel to go to gigs. That really surprised me. I said, 'Damn, these guys are sleeping in a van to come and make a gig with me.' I really appreciated working with them. They sacrificed a lot during their whole careers to make music. I saw a little bit of it during the time when I was with them. Maybe that's the one thing I miss in being away, that I didn't get the chance to do more things with musicians like that, but we made some great records together.

South Jazz Club in Philadelphia 4/1/18
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

South Jazz Club in Philadelphia 4/1/18
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

South Jazz Club in Philadelphia 4/1/18
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

FREDDIE KING
FEELIN' ALRIGHT
COMPLETE 75 NANCY PULSATIONS CONCERT,
ELEMENTAL 6990457.
DISC ONE: HAVE YOU EVER LOVED A WOMAN/ WHOLE LOT OF LOVIN'/ MEDLEY: HEY BABY--MOJO BOOGIE/ THE THIMGS I USED TO DO/ MESSIN' WITH THE KID/ THAT'S ALL RIGHT/ GOING DOWN/ STORMY MONDAY BLUES. 66:00.
DISC TWO: MEDLEY: SEN--SA-- SHUN—LOOKING GOOD –BOOGIE CHILLIN/ SWEET LITTLE ANGEL/ GOT MY MOJO WORKING/SWEET HOME CHICAGO/ WEE BABY BLUES/ THE DANGER ZONE/ FEELING ALRIGHT/ YOU'RE THE ONE—FINALE.59:06.

There's no doubt about it, the Texas Cannonball was ate up with the blues. Appealing to six stringers of all ages his albums on Leon Russell's Shelter label were especially held in high regard by more rock-oriented players while his early work for King/ Federal were esteemed by crusty buesicians like me.This double disc set finds him late period, a little over a year before his passing at the Nancy festival in France. Fronting a crack combo consisting of two keys, second guitar, electric bass and drums he whips through a nicely paced program of old standbys and more recent waxings. Although no no writing credits are listed seasoned listeners probably will recognize scripts from Muddy Waters, Guitar Slim. T-Bone Walker, Percy Mayfield, Junior Wells, B.B.King, John Lee Hooker, Robert Johnson and others. Among the non-blues are the title tune from Dave Mason, Don Nix's "Going Down". "Mojo Boogie" by Gary Moore and "Whole Lot Of Lovin' by way of Willie Dixon and popularized by Led Zeppelin. "Sen-Sa-hun is here,but unfortunately no "Hideaway". King strokes his trusty Gibson sans conventional pick until it sizzles like bacon in a frying pan atop a chordal organ wash on the first side then over tinkling piano on the second. There's no need for detail here, this is blues-inflected bliss at its highest level. Nuff said.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

JOE MAGNARELLI
DECIDEDLY SO
CELLAR MUSIC CMO31825

DECIDEDLY SO /GOOD HEALTH / 10TH ANNIVERSARY / THIS NEARLY WAS MINE / WHEN I GROW TO OLD TO DREAM / WHEN I FALL IN LOVE / JIMMY'S BLUES. 49:47.
Magnarelli, tpt,flgh; Steve Davis, tbn; Jeremy Manasia, p; Clovis Nicholas, b; Rodney Green, d. 3/18/2025. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

By now regular readers of this publication should know of my admiration of the brass work of Joe Magnarelli. To these ears my rank for him would be between Tom Harrell and Terell Stafford whose shared lineage goes back to Freddie & Lee through Clifford, Diz & Fats into Roy, Buck & Bix down to Pops,Oliver and others Mags has landed on Cory Weed's Cellar label . He reacts so well with other horns and he wisely chose slideman Davis as a front line foil giving the overall vibe a sort of Jazz Crusaders ambiance. Plus another treat is the tune-list which has a goodly portion (almost half) of certified oldies. Perhaps the most appealing is 1939's 'When I Grow Too Old To Dream" always heard as a fairly maudlin song to this scribe yet here it's bright and sunny with a bouncy tempo that made me recall some of Newk's cornball reworkings or Bird's classic "Slow Boat To China". The others are "This Nearly Was Mine" published in 1949 and the lovely take of "When I Fall In Love" (1952). Except for the jaunty "D.J." furnished by Steve Davis the remaining four are all from the trumpeter. R.I.P. Akiko Tsuruga.

Larry Hollis

VIBRATIONS IN THE VILLAGE
LIVE AT THE VILLAGE GATE

RESONANCE 2081

JUMP UP AND DOWN –FAST(a)/ ECCLUSIASTICE (a)/ ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE (b)/ LAURA(b)/ KIRK'S DELIGHT(a)/OBOE BLUES(a)/ BLUES MINOR AT THE GATE(b)/ FALLING IN LOVE WITH LOVE(c)/ THREE FOR THE FESTIVAL(c). total time:77:73.

Kirk, ts, stritch, manzello, flt, vcls,whistle, ob, etc.; Horace Parlan,p(a),;Melvin Rhyne(b); Jane Getz(c);Henry Grimes, b; Sonny Brown, d. 11/26 &27/1963. NYC,NY.

B) LIVE AT THE VILLAGE GATE RAHSAAN ROLAND KIRK
SEEK & LISTEN:LIVE AT THE PENTHOUSE

RESONANCE 2080.

SIDE ONE; THE JUMP THING/ ALFIE/ MINGUS-GRIFF SONG/ MEDLEY: EVERY TIME WE SAY GOODBYE-I'VE GOT IT BAD (AND THAT AIN'T GOOD)-SOPHISTICATED LADY-SATIN DOLL/ MEDLEY:BLUES FOR C. & T.-HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN-DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE. 41:41.

SIDE TWO: ODE TO BILLIE JOE/ PRELUDE TO A KISS/FUNK UNDERNEATH/ LOVELLEVELLILOQUI / NOW PLEASE DON'T YOU CRY, BEAUTIFUL EDITH / MAKING LOVE AFTER HOURS. 44:53.

Kirk, As above omit oboe;Rahn Burton, p;Steve Novosel, b;Jimmy Hopps,d. 9 & 13/ 1967. Seattle, WA.

Let's face it, folks. The critical establishment is just now catching on to the legacy of the former Ronald Theodore Kirk. That he was from the start a musical marvel simply evaded most of the big name critics who considered him a freak of nature. Be that as it may, so maybe in hindsight they can do a reevaluation,While this pair of issues is headlined by the same artist they contain subtle differences. Set in the early sixties these nine titles (a) have an almost jam session vibe due to the changes on the piano bench. Four numbers have one of Kirk's cohorts from their Mingus days in Horace Parlan whose resume is fairly well known. The only track that doesn't make it is "Oboe Blues" that has one wishing the honcho would have chosen to play the clarinet. Next up is Mel Rhyne,(b) primarily an organist, he's mostly lauded for his Wes Montgomery association and smooth, laid back approach to the keys. Lastly is the fairly obscure Jane Getz (no kin to Stan) who appears on the original "Three For The Festival" & the 1938 Rogers and Hart evergreen "Falling...". It along with a Mingus chart and the classic "Laura" are the only non-pennings heard.

(B) is a somewhat different story. Captured some four years later at the famed Penthouse it finds our hero in the company of his regular trio on a two disc platter. The first holds only two Kirk compositions with the remainder running from "Alfie" to a pair of medleys of oldies and Duke sparklers. The other disc is all Rahsaan save for Dukes "Prelude..." and the then popular Bobbie Gentry hit. From his 1961 collaboration with Brother Jack McDuff it's great to revisit the fan favorite "Funk Underneath" with piping hot flute. Both of these stunning releases come with eye-catching graphics, extensive notes and good sound. Bright Moments indeed.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

ART BLAKEY & THE JAZZ MESSSENGERS STRASBOURG 82

GEARBOX 4009.

DISC ONE: LITTLE MAN / LONG CAME BETTY / FULLER LOVE / EIGHTY FIVE. 46:13. DISC TWO: I CAN'T GET STARTED / NEW YORK / OLD FOLKS / BLUES MARCH / MOANIN'. 42:48. BLAKEY, d; Terence Blanchard, tpt; Donald Harrison, as; Billy Pierce, ts/ Johnny O'Neal, p; Charles Fambrough, b. 4/1/1982. Strasbourg, France.

To be honest up front I never particularly cared for this Messengers edition At least some of its members. An excellent trumpeter before he got caught up in the soundtrack mill Blanchard did some fine work in partnership with fellow NOLA native Harrison and the one time I was able to hear Fambrough live years ago in Max Roach's combo he was on the money. Although capable musicians O'Neal and Pierce didn't do much for me until hearing this previously unissued gem. The initial disc is a true keeper with only one familiar chart former MD of unit Benny Golsons "Along Came Betty" with other contributions set list-wise from Ron Carter and Bobby Watson. Then current member Fambrough is responsible for the kicking opener. Turning to the second compact disc we can say ditto to a twosome of Golson writings that have achieved classic status along with well-worn items the Vernon Duke lead off and the oft-covered "Old Folks" both of which are rendered with loving care. Except for the leader everyone seems to be playing over their heads in these all-hands treatments The only misstep is a missing "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" mentioned in Syd Schwartz's notes. A valuable addition to the Blakey discography. Thanks to Bu, for extending the message.

Larry Hollis.

Papatamus Redux

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

ALEXANDER CLAFFY: LIVE IN PHILADELPHIA VOL 1
CELLAR JAZZ (RELEASED MARCH 27, 2026

Tenor great Sonny Rollins did not enjoy recording in a studio setting, claiming that the experience inhibited his creative process. Bassist Alexander Claffy and his quintet most likely feel the same way after reviewing the tapes from their live sets at Chris' Jazz Café in Philadelphia. There is nothing inhibited in the way Claffy, alto saxophonist Jaleel Shaw, tenor saxophonist Seamus Blake, pianist Kevin Hays and drummer Bill Stewart attack the eight tunes on Alive in Philadelphia, Vol 1. Hays starts the proceedings with a soothing introduction to George Shearing's "She." Stewart's dynamic drumming and Shaw's searching alto turns the tune into a modal romp. The mood becomes a little relaxed during Hays solo only to be bolstered back up when Blake takes the spotlight. The intensity continues with 7.5, a great of example of what some may call modern-day bebop. Like bebop tunes, 7.5 features a solid bass line delivered by Claffu, an intricate head shared by Shaw and Blake and everyone trying to outdo the other on soaring solos. Shaw's alto sings the blues on Skip James' "Hard Time Killing Floor Blues" and Blake's sensual tenor sings through a classic ballad rendition of "Without a Song." The trio of Claffy, Hays and Stewart stretch out on Brodszky and Cahn's "Be My Love," that features a sonically rich bass solo from the leader. Everyone gets a chance to solo on Wayne Shorter's "Oriental Folk Song" including Stewart, who trades fours with the horns in much the same way Elvin Jones did on the original recording fromShorter's Night Dreamer. The set ends on a high note with a version of John Coltrane's "Just for Love," a somewhat obscure Coltrane tune that appeared on Paul Chamber's 1953 Whims of Chamber release. Hopefully, this is not the end for Live in Philadelphia. After all, this is just Volume 1 and Claffy and the band spent several nights at Chris' Jazz Café — uninhibited and unwavering in their commitment to imbibe azz from the past with modern day sensibilities.
BOTTOM LINE: Bassist Alexander Claffy has the home court advantage on Alive in Philadelphia, Vol 1. For starters, he's playing at Chris' Jazz Café, a club he has played in since he was 14. Second, among the members of the group is another Philly boy — saxophonist Jaleel Shaw. You can feel the energy and excitement of this hometown crowd in the energy and excitement of the group's playing. Plus a shout out to my hometown boy from Des Moines, Iowa – Bill Stewart.

Papatamus Redux

DANIEL CARTER/STEVE HIRSH: CONVOCATION
MAHAKALA RECORDS (RELEASED MARCH 6, 2026)
The new release from multi-instrumentalist Daniel Carter and drummer Steve Hirsh is indeed a Convocation — an assembly of people called together for a meeting. In this case, Mahakala founder Chad Fowler called these two musicians together to explore what happens when you combine the searching spirit of Carter with the natural rhythms of Hirsh. Unlike some academic convocations that are used to introduce students to each another and the institution, Carter and Hirsh need no introduction to one another. In addition to appearing on Phosphene with guitarist Sally Gates in 2024 (Mahakala 080), the two have been performing live over the past several years. They also don't need any introduction to the institution of free improvisation. Carter has been investigating the genre for more than 33 years and Hirsh, is quickly becoming a first call drummer for many outstanding sessions on the Mahakala label. So, this Convocation is more about introducing listeners to the explorations of Carter and Hirsh as they come together to celebrate their passion for going deeper and deeper into the past, present and future of improvised music. Consider the opening track, Leaving Autumn, on which Carter's trumpet moves from contemplative to assertive moods while Hirsh adds just the right percussive colors to accompany and propel Carter. Knowingly or not, Carter quotes the opening line of "Autumn Leaves" before switching to saxophone for more sonic conversations with Hirsh. The two flutter and swirl around each on the appropriately titled "Butterfly's Shadow, which features Carter on sax floating free as a butterfly in the shadow of Hirsh's sensitive brush work. Carter switches to piano on "When Love," a tune on which both musicians seamlessly work through the many faces of love — tender, passionate, unforgiving and often chaotic. Steve's rhythms caress Carter's thoughtful sax playing on the more serene "Sanctified." Carter and Hirsh soothe, swell and swing on the title track with Carter on flute in a hypnotic Middle Eastern groove before shifting to trumpet as the music becomes more complex. Unlike some convocations you may have attended, don't expect to be bored by the pronouncements from Carter and Hirsh on this Convocation. Much like the illustration of a tree on its cover, the music is constantly growing, everchanging in colors and strongly rooted in the essence of jazz. This is one Convocation fans of free improvisation will want to attend.

Papatamus Redux

BOTTOM LINE: Convocation, the new recording from Daniel Carter and Steve Hirsh, can best be summed up in a mathematical equation — 1+1 = ∞. One is for the spiritual searching of multi-instrumentalist Daniel Carter. The other one is for the natural rhythms of drummer Steve Hirsh. It all adds up to infinite grooves, timbres, rhythms and dynamics that characterize the best in free improvisation.

MICHAEL BAIRD: NO DOGMAS ALLOWED
SWP RECORDS (RELEASED OCTOBER 2025)
When asked how to describe the music on his most recent release, drummer Michael Baird answered, "modern music." He could have simply used the title of the release by saying, "It's No Dogmas Allowed music!" Five longtime musical friends now residing in The Netherland (and one from Belgium) came together leaving any musical beliefs they held as true behind them. The result is ten individual freely improvised tracks of open spaces, undulating rhythms, shifting timbres and visionary improvisations A hymn-like horn choir of Michael Moore (reeds), Jon Birdsong (cornet), Hans Hasebos (sax) and Henk Raven (tuba) opens the proceedings on "Short Awry Statement," which quickly morphs into a free interchange of musical thoughts. There is a nod to the funereal music of Carla Bley on the opening and ending of "Blessing Counts." The horns with Hasebos on vibes play the opening section in unison before launching into more free interplay that emphasizes the use of calming space and sonics. "Subterraneans" sounds exactly like the title — ominous at times as Birdsong's cornet chatters and chirps while Raven's tuba flutters in the lowest registers possible. Moore's signature sound and lines are weave their way though the tune's percussion interlude. Baird unleashes an arsenal of rhythms in an open conversation with Raven on tenor on "Dialogistic". The short (two-minute) "Blowing Back" could easily fit as an interlude on an ICP Orchestra performance. Moore, Baird and Birdsong intertwine on three separate trio tracks that are as contemplative as they are combative. The musicians react to each other's ideas on "Quintet Impro," at times blustery and at other times dreamy. The session ends with "Meanwhile Revisited," which showcases Birdsong's cornet and Raven's use of a baritone sax mouthpiece on his tuba (much like he does on "Subterraneans") The best way to appreciate this music as a listener is to approach it in the same way the musicians did — with No Dogmas Allowed.

BOTTOM LINE: Open your ears and close your mind when listening to Michael Baird's No Dogmas Allowed. It's a recording rich in open spaces, undulating rhythms, shifting timbres and visionary improvisations.

INGRID JENSEN: LANDINGS
NEWVELLE (RELEASED FEBRUARY 27, 2026)

In 2002, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen teamed up with pianist/organist Gary Versace and drummer Jon Wikan on her Project One: Now As Then release. Twenty-three years later, Versace and Wikan (who has recorded extensively with Jensen during the intervening years) return to the studio along with guitarist Marvin Sewell for Landings. Jensen's style has matured since that 2002 date, moving beyond her early influences such as Woody Shaw to embrace the poetic warmth, intriguing harmonies and arresting compositions of Kenny Wheeler. Landings is proof of her arrival at a new level of playing and composing. The quartet revels in an opportunity to breathe new life into George Coleman's "Amsterdam After Dark." Following Jensen's abstract introduction, the quartet slips into the familiar melody. Jensen's powerful solo showcases her ability to glide from low notes to high notes in a single bound. Propelled by Jensen's solo and the modern comping of Versace (on organ) and Sewell, the composer of the tune himself — tenor player George Coleman, at age 89 — takes an equally powerful solo. Coleman steps aside for the remainder of the session which features originals from various band members as well as a nicely arranged version of Carla Bley's dreamy and quirky "Ida Lupino" on which Jensen, Sewell and Versace's lines intertwine over Wikan's steady beat. Unlike the opening "Amsterdam After Dark," which harkens back to an earlier time in jazz, the originals tend to have a more modern feel. These include Jensen's noirish "New Body, featuring a soaring Jensen solo; " Sewell's ballad "The Workers Dance," with his rock infused guitar solo; and the shifting rhythms of Versace's "Many Homes, Many Places," on which the sound of her muted trumpet shines. The adept playing of Versace, Sewell and Wikan is ideally suited for these various moods including the delicate chamber-like feel of "Handmaiden's Tale," on which Versace plays piano; and the almost free and definitely funky feel of the title track. The mood

turns back to classic jazz with the slow blues groove of "Home." One other element of Jensen's playing is more pronounced on Landings than her earlier recordings — the unnecessary echo added to her sound, which is hauntingly beautiful in its own right. Despite that, Landings continues the Newvelle's ten year tradition of exceptionally recorded, well-programmed and expertly performed recordings.

BOTTOM LINE: Sandwiched between a modern recasting of George Coleman's "Amsterdam after Dark" (which includes a solo from its 89-year-old composer) and a straight-ahead slow blues are six originals and a version of Paul Bley's "Ida Lupino" with. a more contemporary feel thanks to the performances from leader Ingrid Jensen, Gary Versace, Marvin Sewell and Jon Wikan. Another outstanding session from Newvelle!