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Wayne Shorter

jazz & blues report

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Wayne Shorter 85



Wayne Shorter Celebrates His 85th Birthday With Emanon

Jazz legend Wayne Shorter celebrated his 85th birthday on August 25, and on December 2 the 10-time GRAMMY winner and NEA Jazz Master will reach another milestone in his illustrious career when he is honored at the 2018 Kennedy Center Honors in Washington DC.

On September 14, Shorter will release his long-awaited project Emanon, an extraordinary musical and visual experience that presents a triple album of original music by Shorter performed by The Wayne Shorter Quartet—featuring Shorter on soprano and tenor saxophone with Danilo Perez on piano, John Patitucci on bass, and Brian Blade on drums—with and without the 34-piece Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

The music is accompanied by a graphic novel penned by Shorter with Monica Sly and illustrated by Randy DuBurke. Emanon is a physical-only

release that will be available in two versions; a Standard Edition that packages 3x CDs with the graphic novel, and a Deluxe Edition that packages 3x 180g vinyl LPs and 3x CDs with the graphic novel enclosed in a beautiful hardcover slipcase.

DISC 1

The Wayne Shorter Quartet With Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

1. Pegasus
2. Prometheus Unbound
3. Lotus
4. The Three Marias

DISC 2

The Wayne Shorter Quartet Live In London

1. The Three Marias
2. Lost And Orbits Medley

DISC 3

The Wayne Shorter Quartet Live In London

1. Lotus
2. She Moves Through The Fair
3. Adventures Aboard The Golden Mean
4. Prometheus Unbound

Read the Emanon bio written by esteemed author &

Wayne Shorter biographer Michelle Mercer below.

* * *

Randy DuBurke will always remember that auspicious moment when the news arrived. It was St. Nick's Day in Switzerland, where the Brooklyn-raised illustrator resides. After DuBurke had finished making holiday magic for his kids, an email brought an enchanted possibility for him: Wayne Shorter admired his books, and wanted to collaborate on a graphic novel and recording project.

"I said, 'The Wayne Shorter?'" DuBurke says. "I was sitting in my studio looking at my CD collection, and my eyes lit on 'Speak No Evil' and 'Beyond the Sound Barrier.' At that point I knew I had to be a part of this!"

At the suggestion of Blue Note president Don Was, Shorter had checked out DuBurke's well-respected illustrations in graphic novels on Malcolm X and Deadwood Dick. "I could sort of project myself into Randy's general state of mind from childhood," Shorter says. "I could see it in his drawings. He has those 'I wish' lines in his work; he's aiming for how he wants the world to be." Shorter is a serious comic book aficionado, and has long identified with the genre's heroes and alternate realms—he even created his own comic book of blue ink drawings, *Other Worlds*, at age 15.

To launch his collaboration with DuBurke, Shorter had four studio tracks: "Pegasus," "Lotus," "The Three Marias," and "Prometheus Unbound." Shorter's long-running quartet with pianist Danilo Perez, bassist John Patitucci, and drummer Brian Blade recorded this music with the 34-piece Orpheus Chamber Orchestra in February 2013, the day after a combined Carnegie Hall performance.

"Just before Miles passed," Shorter remembers, "He said, 'Wayne, I want you to write something for me with strings and an orchestra, but make sure you put a window in so I can get out of there.' He definitely did not say, 'Make the strings swing.' Working with an orchestra is like crossing the street and talking to a neighbor you haven't talked to for 10 years. It's the thing the world needs now: joining forces."

Shorter says the agile Orpheus orchestra, which is conducted cooperatively by the musicians themselves, caught the vision and spirit of his wide-ranging music. "The feeling was, 'Where do we go from here? Straight up!' That's the excitement the orchestra musicians exuded in the studio. Everybody had a voice. We'd stop here or there, somewhere in the middle, and one of the musicians would say, 'Hey, do you think this line should be more vocal? Yeah, let's try it that way.' Everyone was on their toes, and it was a labor of love."

The title of this four-composition orchestral suite is also Shorter's title character for the graphic novel: *Emanon*, or "no name" spelled backward. "When Dizzy Gillespie had a piece of music in the late 40s called 'Emanon,' it hit me way back then as a teenager: 'No name' means a whole lot." It meant something that the

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This photo of Gary Bartz captured by Ron Weinstock at the 2008 Duke Ellington Jazz Festival is just one of hundreds of Ron's photos you can view online at www.flickr.com/photos/novaron

Dizzy Gillespie/Milton Shaw tune, arranged by John Lewis in 1946, transcended big band jazz conventions with a more modernist statement. Innovation, authenticity, and self-reliance were hallmark virtues of the mid-century art and culture that captured Shorter's imagination and shaped his artistic character.

"The connection with Emanon and artists and other heroes is the quest to find originality, which is probably the closest thing you can get to creation," Shorter says. "Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and some comic heroes, they lose their power or identity and become something called human, so that a human being has to do the same thing that Superman and all of them do."

After DuBurke had a long talk with Shorter about the composition titles, quantum mechanics, and much else, he got to work. "I'd put the Emanon cuts on," DuBurke says. "Or I'd watch *Cosmos* videos with Neil de Grasse Tyson. Whatever came into my head as I sat at the drawing board, I sketched in black and white or in color. Wayne said, 'Nobody's gonna edit you, just go with it.' So I felt entirely free creatively, and delivered some first story sketches to Wayne."

With DuBurke's panels in hand, the screenwriter Monica Sly, who helped Shorter and Herbie Hancock write their viral 2016 "Letter to the Next Generation of Artists," worked with Shorter to develop and structure the graphic novel. Central to the story was the multiverse theory, or the idea that the universe we inhabit is one of an infinite number that all exist in parallel realities. Listening to each of four orchestral tracks, Sly and Shorter "came up with a fear that matched the vibe of the track," Sly says. "That 'fear' then defined the world Emanon would be inhabiting in that specific universe of the story. And each of the four universes exists simultaneously—from what I know, that's very in line with the improvisational, everything-exists-in-the-moment aspect of jazz."

The lead track and first Emanon world, "Pegasus," addresses the complacency of people who fear their power and potential, instead living within prescribed boxes. Shorter certainly composes well out of the jazz box on "Pegasus," with a style as much in the lineage of great American composers like Copland, Gershwin and Ives as the one of Ellington and Monk. Characteristically, the composition's advanced harmonies defy conventions while its soulful lyricism affords accessibility.

Early in the collaboration, Shorter mentioned a Pegasus cover illustration for a science fiction book by Anne McCaffrey. But listening to the composition, DuBurke didn't see the ubiquitous white winged horse of Greek mythology; he envisioned the earlier Pegasus of Ethiopian myth, a brown horned and winged creature. When DuBurke gave Shorter a few working Pegasus sketches at a concert in France, creative inspiration flowed back to the source: Wayne kept DuBurke's illustrations on his music stand as he performed, using them as an improvisational muse.

The "Lotus" track and universe speaks to the de-

structive effects of divisive thinking, and how a fear of difference can lead to war. For Shorter, the Buddhist symbol of the lotus flower presents an alternative. "The lotus exists only in the swamp, in our world of turmoil, and the blooming flower purifies the water around it. Within the story, those workings of the lotus are being carried out through Emanon's actions." Within the music, the quartet's energetic cadenzas grow from the larger orchestral landscape, clarifying and enhancing its themes.

In "The Three Marias" universe of the novel, Emanon confronts the fear of knowledge that leads to censorship and the suppression of thought and free will. The real-life arrest of three Portuguese women for writing obscene literature inspired the original electric version of "The Three Marias" on Shorter's 1985 *Atlantis* album. Shorter later revised the piece for performance with the woodwind quintet Imani Winds.

In a testament to the considerable symphonic expertise of his sidemen, Shorter asked Perez and Patitucci to orchestrate "The Three Marias" for the version heard here. "I think he asked us in the spirit of a father challenging his sons," Patitucci says. "To give us a chance to do something special." Perez and Patitucci collaborated on tour, meeting before and after shows with Wayne, passing the score back and forth. "We focused on the strings mostly," Patitucci says. "And after we'd performed it live, we wound up honing it even more—it was fitting, because that's Wayne's own method, endless revision."

Emanon's "Prometheus Unbound," an enthralling episodic piece of music, concentrates on the fear of the unknown, and proposes an embrace of the fluidity and unpredictability of life. That summarizes the overall development within the character Emanon, who for all the novel's science fiction adventure elements is essentially an everyman on a universal hero's journey. "Emanon is like so many characters in that role of trying to find a way in the world, and also make the world around him a better place," DuBurke says. Longtime fans of Shorter may read something of the musician himself into the character. "Wayne is fearless in the face of adversity," Sly says. "Excited by the prospect of the unknown. Brave enough to stand up for justice and stand out in a crowd, yet sensitive and aware of the value of each life around him."

"Wayne is the great American composer," Patitucci says. "It's always been a matter of him having the chance to display all that he can do in large musical forms, and also in his other areas of brilliance and imagination like art and storytelling, too. So Emanon is a fulfillment of a lifetime vision." It's almost an embarrassment of riches that Emanon is a triple-album release, with the two-disc *Live In London* quartet recordings of the orchestral material, along with "Lost and Orbits Medley," "She Moves Through The Fair," and "Adventures Aboard The Golden Mean."

With Emanon, Wayne Shorter shares his artistic

multiverse. Everyone will create his or her own experience with the novel and music—but be prepared for that experience to involve the unknown. “After reading and listening to Emanon, you might begin to notice alternative realities glimmering beneath the everyday world around you,” Esperanza Spalding writes in her introduction.

“A sense of awe and wonder was something that Wayne and I wanted to get to with this project,” affirms DuBurke. “I would hope with Emanon that people would have some sense of the music washing over them and images pulling them in, almost a sensory overload that takes them deeper into themselves, which is also deeper into the multiverse.”

—Michelle Mercer, June 2018

Michelle Mercer is a New York Times bestselling author and a regular music commentator for National Public Radio. She is the author of *Footprints: The Life and Work of Wayne Shorter* and *Will You Take Me As I Am: Joni Mitchell's Blue Period*.

Tickets Still Available for Monterey Jazz Festival

Headliners Include Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, Norah Jones with Brian Blade & Chris Thomas, Jon Batiste with the Dap-Kings, Dianne Reeves, Charles Lloyd & the Marvels with Lucinda Williams, and Many Others
MJF Presents Tributes to Geri Allen, Ray Brown, and Michael Brecker

MONTEREY CA - Three-day Arena and Grounds Ticket Packages for the 61st Annual Monterey Jazz Festival, September 21-23 are on sale now, and can be purchased online at montereyjazzfestival.org or by calling 888.248.6499.

The Festival will feature nearly 140 performances from iconic and emerging jazz artists, educational events, conversations, films, and exhibits on eight stages, for 30 hours of live music spanning two days and three nights, accompanied by an array of 75 vendors selling international cuisine and merchandise on the oak-studded 20 acres of the Monterey County Fair & Event Center.

The Artists-in-Residence for MJF61 will be Tia Fuller and Ingrid Jensen. Oscar Hernández & the Spanish Harlem Orchestra will debut the 2018 commission piece, *Monterey Encounter* (A Latin Jazz Suite for Flute) with NEA Jazz Master Hubert Laws; and 2018 NEA Jazz Master recipient Dianne Reeves will be the Showcase Artist, performing four times over the weekend, including the premiere of her new Brazilian project, *Beleza Brazil* with guitarist Romero Lubambo.

“I am so pleased that in a year when there is so

much attention being paid to the inclusion of women, the 61st Monterey Jazz Festival will celebrate the talents of exceptional women jazz artists,” said Colleen Bailey, MJF Executive Director.

“As we enter our seventh decade as the world’s longest continuously-running jazz festival, I remain inspired and committed to producing and presenting the world’s finest jazz artists, while making sure that we represent the music and the musicians in an inclusive, exciting and fun manner,” said Tim Jackson, MJF Artistic Director.

A six-time JazzTimes Readers Poll winner, 2018’s GRAMMY Award-winning Arena lineup on Friday night, September 21 includes Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, presenting *Spaces* with “Lil Buck” and Jared Grimes; Dianne Reeves; and a Tribute to Geri Allen, presented by Tia Fuller and Ingrid Jensen featuring Terri Lyne Carrington, Kris Davis, Shamie Royston, Maurice Chestnut, DJ Val, and Robert Hurst.

The Saturday afternoon September 22 Arena lineup includes Oscar Hernández & the Spanish Harlem Orchestra debuting the 2018 commission piece *Monterey Encounter* (A Latin Jazz Suite for Flute) featuring Hubert Laws; José James singing the songs of Bill Withers; and Thornetta Davis.

Saturday night includes the 60th edition of Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour with Cécile McLorin Salvant, Bria Skonberg, Melissa Aldana, music director Christian Sands, Yasushi Nakamura, and Jamison Ross; Remembering Ray Brown featuring Christian McBride, Benny Green, and Greg Hutchinson with special guests John Clayton, John Patitucci and Dianne Reeves; and Jon Batiste with the Dap-Kings.

The Arena lineup on Sunday afternoon September 23 includes Charles Lloyd & the Marvels with special guest Lucinda Williams, Bokanté; and the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra with Tia Fuller and Ingrid Jensen.

Sunday night in the Arena will feature Norah Jones with Brian Blade & Chris Thomas; a special tribute celebrating Michael Brecker with Randy Brecker, Donny McCaslin, Gil Goldstein, Adam Rogers, John Patitucci, and the Anat Cohen Tentet.

Full Weekend Arena Ticket Packages offer a reserved seat to each of the five concerts on the Jimmy Lyons Stage in the Arena (renewable annually) plus, access to the seven additional Grounds Stages, and all Festival activities. Full Weekend Arena Ticket Packages begin at \$340.

Full Weekend Grounds Packages offer access to seven Grounds stages and activities. Full Weekend Grounds Packages are \$155.

Youth, student and military discounts for Grounds Tickets are also available for purchase at the Box Office the week of the Festival ONLY. Military Active Duty, Guard, Reserves, Gold Star, Retirees and Veterans must show valid Military I.D.

Grounds activities include over 120 events, conversations, films, and musical performances, with weekend highlights from Jane Bunnett & Maqueque; Jane Ira

Bloom; Joey DeFrancesco & the People; Tia Fuller Quartet; Dave Grusin (solo piano and in conversation); Fred Hersch (solo, duo with Jane Ira Bloom, and trio); José James; Ingrid & Christine Jensen Infinitude; Harold Lopez-Nussa Trio; Wadada Leo Smith; Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio; Christian McBride Trio; Donny McCaslin Group; Dianne Reeves; Mwenso & the Shakes; Thumbscrew with Mary Halvorson, Michael Formanek and Tomas Fujiwara; DownBeat Blindfold Test with John Clayton; Julian Lage Trio; Bill Frisell Trio; MJF on Tour; Lisa Mezzacappa AvantNOIR; Jamie Baum Septet+; No BS! Brass Band; Thornetta Davis; Bobby Floyd Trio; Cameron Graves; Tammy L. Hall Peace-tet with Kim Nalley; Adam Rogers & Dice; Gabriel Royal; Kristen Strom; John Santos Unusual Standards with Kenny Washington & Destani Wolf; Veronica Swift; Katie Thiroux Trio; Knower; Ladama; top student bands from the 2018 Next Generation Jazz Festival — Northgate High School Jazz Band I; Valencia High School Two N' Four; Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts Jazz Combo I; SFJAZZ High School All-Stars Big Band; Colburn Jazz Workshop Thursday Night Band; University of Central Oklahoma Jazz Ensemble I; University of Denver Lamont Jazz Orchestra; Western Michigan University Gold Company; University of Nevada, Las Vegas Honors Trio; William Brandt, and others. All weekend long, the exhibit *The Color of*

Jazz: Album cover photographs by Pete Turner will be in the Pacific Jazz Café Gallery; plus the films *Dave Grusin: Not Enough Time*, and *Two Trains Runnin'* in the Jazz Theater; and much more.

Also on sale are Full Weekend Premier Club hospitality passes, priced at \$340. Benefits include a furnished setting offering closed-circuit Arena simulcasts, wines from Monterey County and gourmet cuisine, private restrooms, indoor and outdoor patio seating, a hosted bar, and more. Arena or Grounds Ticket purchase is required.

The 12th Annual Jazz Legends Gala, held at the Inn at Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach, will honor Dianne Reeves on Thursday, September 20, 2018. Hosted by Christian McBride and Terri Lyne Carrington, special performances at this beautiful location will feature the Christian McBride Trio with special guest Benny Green, and the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra. Cost is \$325 per person. Proceeds from this event benefit Monterey Jazz Festival's jazz education programs. Contact 831.233.3711 for more information.

The full lineup for the 61st Monterey Jazz Festival can be found on montereyjazzfestival.org

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Photo © Robyn Churchill

Why Some People Think *Duke Ellington* Is a Member of the Royal Family.

KIDS DON'T GET ENOUGH ART THESE DAYS. So you can see why some of them might accidentally confuse a jazz legend named Duke with royalty named duke. But it's finally time to set the record straight.

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington didn't rule over a small English estate. Instead he reigned supreme over jazz institutions like The Cotton Club. He riffed

powerfully on the piano, but it was the full orchestra that he considered his most compelling instrument. He introduced improvisation to his compositions — a process unheard of using a 15-piece orchestra. The result was a different approach to jazz that sparked a revolution and an evolution.

His music spread across the world with songs like "Sophisticated Lady," "In a



*A piano player. A composer. An orchestra leader.
 Duke Ellington reigned over a land called Jazz.*

"Sentimental Mood," and "Take the 'A' Train." His historical concert in 1953 at the Newport Jazz Festival has entered the lexicon of legendary live performances. There is no doubt about it, Ellington's brand of jazz has contributed significantly to the American songbook and to the lives of anyone who has ever tapped their foot to a beat.

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can

really transform lives.

In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science. And the more likely they'll become well-rounded, cool members of society. For *Ten Simple Ways* to get more art in kids' lives, visit AmericansForTheArts.org.



*Royal dukes are squawesville.
 They have no rhythm
 And they wear crowns.*



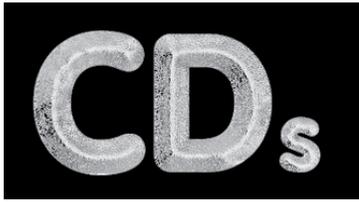
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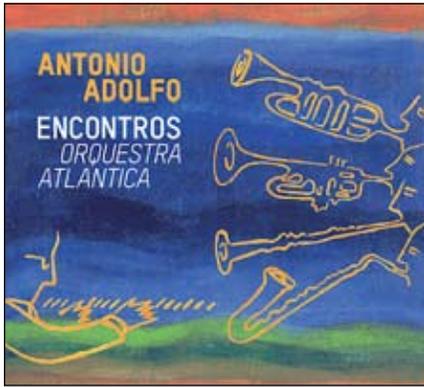


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ANTONIO ADOLFO
Encontros Orquestra Atlantica
AAM MUSIC

Most of the recordings of the Brazilian born pianist-composer-arranger Antonio Adolfo have found him in a small group context as he explores his usage of Brazilian rhythms in a jazz context. He was so impressed when he saw Orquestra Atlantica in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, he invited them to be part of a new recording. The personnel for this recording include Adolfo: piano; Nelson Faria and Claudio Jorge: acoustic guitars; Leo Amuedo: electric guitar; Jorge Helder: bass; Rafael Barata: drums; Dada Costa: percussion; Jessé Sadoc: trumpet & flugelhorn; Danilo Sinna: alto saxophone & flute; Marcelo Martins: tenor saxophone & flute; Marcos Nimrichter: accordion and Ze Renato: vocals. The arrangements of Jessé Sadoc and Marcelo Martins mix together the sound of big band jazz with various Brazilian styles.

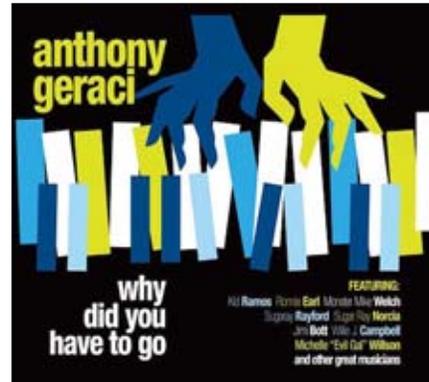
Adolfo describes the opening selection, “Partido Samba-Funk,” as a tune combining samba with a variety of Brazilian funk, and while it has sparkling percussion and solid solos by Adolfo and Danilo Sinna on alto sax, it is Jessé Sadoc’s explosive trumpet solo that gets the recording off to a stirring start. Ze Renato contributed a wordless vocal to this track as well as “Pentatonica,” with a strong melody driven by a strong rhythmic pulse and strong solos by guitarist Leo Amuedo and tenor saxophonist Marcelo Martins. Martins’ arrangement is quite attractive here with especially nice writing to employ the lower register of his horns. Named after the band, “Atlantica,” is a medium tempo ballad, with a solid bass solo by Helder along with Martins’ spry bird-like flute playing. The driving “Luizao” is dedicated to the late Luizao Maia, a former member of Adolfo’s band and a bass innovator in playing the

samba. It has a brassy arrangement and has a slightly gruff valve trombone solo from Serginho.

The one cover is Miles Davis’ second “Milestones,” which combines hard bop with the Frevo style of Brazilian music on a briskly-paced tune that features an imaginative, well constructed piano solo by the leader and a Marcos Nimrichter’s spirited, horn-like accordion solo with Sadoc’s arrangement especially coloring the solos, adding to on this dynamic performance. Sadoc’s lovely flugelhorn adds to the contrasting moods of “Saudade,” while Nelson Faria’s acoustic guitar evokes the one-string berimbau as well as flamenco guitar on his opening to “Capoeira Yá,” which also has another fiery trumpet solo by Sadoc, while “Africa Bahia Brasil,” has an irresistible groove, sizzle in the horns (including Sinna’s impassioned alto sax) and one of the leader’s strongest solos.

After a lovely “Delicada Jazz Waltz,” with charming solos by Adolfo and accordionist Nimrichter (and lovely scoring of the flutes by Sadoc), this recording closes with a vibrant rendition of Adolfo’s biggest hit, “Sa Marino,” with Martins soloing strongly and energetic trading of lines by Levi Chaves on baritone sax and trombonist Aldivas Ayres. It closes another striking recording by Adolfo.

Ron Weinstock



ANTHONY GERACI
Why Did You Have To Go
SHINING STONE RECORDS

Pianist and organist Anthony Geraci brings his four decades plus experience with Sugar Ray and the BlueTones to a second album under his own name. He has brought together quite a group of singers and musicians including vocalists Sugar Ray Norcia, Sugaray Rayford, Michelle “Evil Gal” Willson, Willie J. Laws, Dennis Brennan and Brian Templeton; guitarists Ronnie Earl, Monster Mike Welch, Kid Ramos, and Troy Gonyea; bassists Willie J. Campbell and Michael ‘Mudcat’ Ward; drummers Jimi Bott; Marty Richards, and Neil Gouvin; and horn players Sax Gordon and Doug Woolverton.

Geraci wrote all thirteen of the songs and they cover a variety of tempos and styles starting with the opening “Why Did You Have To Go,” wonderfully sung by Norcia with some terrific Texas to West Coast slashing guitar from Welch. It is followed by a hot shuffle,

“Don’t the Grass Look Greener,” with some shattering guitar from Kid Ramos along with a hot Rayford vocal. Ramos takes the lead on the Chicago blues shuffle groove of “Fly on the Wall.” Willie J. Laws handles the vocal on a song that sounds like an unissued Johnny Young number while Ramos plays more in a traditional Chicago vein and Geraci superbly channels Otis Spann. This number contrasts with the late night feel of “Angelina, Angelina,” where Rayford’s vocal pleads about his woman leaving him stranded at the Courthouse door. “Long Way Home” has a New Orleans groove with horns adding punch (Woolverton soars on his trumpet solo), while Geraci plays solid Crescent City styled piano.

“Two Steps Away From The Blues” sounds like a classic 50s Texas urban blues wonderfully sung by Michelle Wilson, while more Chicago styled blues can be heard in “Time’s Running Out,” with Norcia singing wonderfully and Ronnie Earl taking the lead guitar solo. “Baptized in the River Yazoo” is a delightful down-home Willie Laws vocal backed solely by Geraci’s superb backing. Dennis Brennan, while not bad, is perhaps the less striking singer on this recording, although the backing he receives on “Too Many Bad Decisions” is excellent. “What About Me” is a nicely done vocal duet between Michelle Wilson and Brian Templeton.

After Geraci channels Spann again behind a first-rate Norcia vocal on “My Last Goodbye,” (with more sterling Ronnie Earl guitar), this album closes with his jazzy instrumental “A Minor Affair,” a swinging cool number on which Woolverton plays with a nice middle-range tone, followed by a driving solo from Gordon. There is so much to enjoy on this recording with the fresh, varied material from Geraci, his own consistently strong playing, a solid studio band and terrific singing and playing. “Why Did You Have To Go” is superb album.

Ron Weinstock



COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA

All About That Basie!
CONCORD JAZZ

In name this may be the Count Basie Orchestra, but given that the Count and practically everyone who had a significant connection with him is long gone, this is essentially a tribute band under the direction of Scotty Barnhart. This new recording was produced by

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drummer former Basie drummer Gregg Field who states “that common throughout the entire album is that great Basie sound.” Further he comments “Basie’s band throughout the years was able to successfully cover hits of the era with their sound and as part of the new album we have continued that tradition including hits from legends like Stevie Wonder and Leonard Cohen as well artists as contemporary as Adele.” What you have as a number of notable contemporary performers guesting with a band playing essentially a pastiche of the ‘New Testament’ Basie Band.

They certainly do a fine job of emulating aspects of the Basie sound as on Stevie Wonder’s “My Cherie Amour,” where Wonder himself contributes some marvelous harmonica while Take 5 takes on the Joe Williams vocals on “Every Day I Have The Blues.” Kurt Elling’s very resonant singing reprises Sinatra with Basie at the Sands on “Don’t Worry ‘Bout Me,” while despite a hot Jon Faddis trumpet solo, “Tequila” is an anonymous modern big band jazz number with pianist Bobby Floyd’s solo far removed from what Basie would have done. More of a Basie feel is present on the rendition of Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah” with Mark William’s fine plunger mute trombone solo. Then follows a rendition of “April in Paris” that Wild Bill Davis arranged for Basie which this version employs, but has Joey DeFrancesco as a guest who is the feature soloist who initially evokes Wild Bill’s churchy sound in his orchestral solo which sports a solid tenor sax solo (my advance lacked personnel).

Carmen Bradford, who was with Basie, does an able rendition of “Honeysuckle Rose.” However, this rendition pales to that by the original Basie Band where Basie still displayed his stride roots along with solos from the like of Lester Young and Sweets Edison. A live version is available on the Savory Collection reissues. After a nice rendition of Adele’s “Hello,” Jamie Davis sings well on a small group version of “Sent For You Yesterday,” which transforms the Jimmy Rushing classic into a generic blues patching together some traditional verses but which lacks the surging orchestration that was driven by Jo Jones’ drumming of the classic original. Is it really so hard to occasionally capture the feel of Basie’s early band.

There is much well played music here, but other Big Bands (such as the Frankie Capp-Nat Pierce Jugernaut) captured the spirit of Basie equally well. This is very enjoyable to listen to but hardly essential.

Ron Weinstock

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BOZ SCAGGS
Out of the Blue
CONCORD RECORDS

It has been decades since Boz Scaggs had hits with R&B tinged gems like Fenton Robinson's "Loan me a Dime," "Lowdown" and "Lido Shuffle." Still performing and making records, his latest effort has him performing several blues classics along with originals from Jack Walroth and a Neil Young cover.

He has assembled a star-studded studio band including guitarists Doyle Bramhall II, Ray Parker Jr. and Charlie Sexton, bassist Willie Weeks, drummer Jim Keltner, keyboardist Jim Cox, and Walroth on harmonica with Scaggs adding guitar on several tracks along with the saxophones of Eric Crystal (tenor sax and all solos), Thomas Pulitzer (tenor sax) and Stephen 'Doc' Kupka on baritone sax.

What is refreshing about the performances here is generally the restraint in vocals and the backing. This is set out on the opening Walroth blues, "Rock and Stick," with spare, crisply played understated backing with effective use of tremolo (by Bramhall?), a nice harmonica solo and Scaggs effective use of a falsetto in his singing.

There are two very nicely sung Bobby Bland covers, "I've Just Got To Forget You" and "The Feeling Is Gone," with the horn arrangement based on Joe Davis' originals on the classic Bland recordings. Scaggs' slightly understated singing provides a believability to his vocals here and on the Jimmy McCracklin cover, "I Want to Know," with the surging horns set against the crisp rhythm and Charlie Sexton concisely lays out some Texas fire in his guitar solo.

Walroth's "Radiator 110" is a hard hitting rocker with Walroth adding harp, Steve Freund and Scaggs on guitar and Ricky Fataar laying down an emphatic groove here. "Little Miss Night and Day" is a rollicking, roadhouse rocker with boogie inflected piano by Cox and rocking guitar solos by Bramhall and Sexton. There is an atmospheric take on Neil Young's "On the Beach," followed by an easy going Jimmy Reed boogie, "Down in Virginia," with Bramhall evoking Reed's effective harmonica style along with laying down some Eddie Taylor inspired guitar licks.

Scaggs has always had an affinity for the blues and classic soul since his days with Steve Miller and

this recording shows him to be a most capable blues interpreter as well as being able to infuse a blues feeling into the original material that is sympathetically backed by his studio band resulting in this very engaging album.

Ron Weinstock



GAYLE KOLB
Getting Sentimental
JERUJAZZ

Once having headlined some of the finest night clubs in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and her hometown of Chicago, Gayle Kolb took break from singing. After being away from singing for some time, she has returned but now as a jazz singer who has this debut album. This was produced by the well regarded Chicago bassist Bobby Broom, in whose trio Carroll has been a longtime member; Cleveland piano phenom Joey Skoch; ace trombonist Tom Garling of the Chicago Jazz Orchestra and Chicago Yestet; and drummer George Fludas.

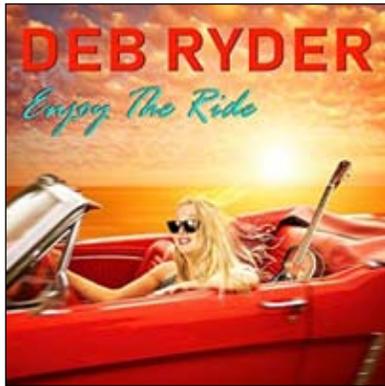
One of the surprises of this recording is Garling's trombone. His playing is what one first hears on the opening title track. He plays in a swinging fashion under Kolb's low tones and cool, relaxed delivery. Her enunciation, timing and subtle changes in pitch helps convey a lyric's meaning. She also is a pretty fair scatterer as can be heard as she delightfully trades fours with Bobby Broom on Ray Brown's "Gravy Waltz." Her voice has a slightly parched quality that lends it character as can be heard in her marvelous thoughtful singing on the Mancini-Bricusse ballad, "Two For the Road," with precious solos from Broom and Garling, convincingly expressing the mood.

The wonderful swing of her vocal and the backing brings new life to "Second Time Around," with pianist Skoch shining as much as Broom here. She delivers a marvelous, understated vocal on "Wing," a blues that Carroll wrote that opens as a lament with just piano accompaniment before the rest of the band joins in and it becomes a medium tempo swinger with exciting interplay between Broom and Garling. There are the unusual medium tempo arrangement of "If You Went Away," with Skoch's electric piano lending a dreaming quality, and a wonderful interpretation of Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman" (a major hit for the late Glen Campbell), a song that benefits from her restraint

as well as the sympathetic backing (Skoch's solo is a model of subtlety and inventiveness).

A duet with pianist Skoch, "My Ideal," concludes a delightful debut of Gayle Kolb. Accompanied by a terrific band on a choice selection of songs, Kolb emerges on her debut as a most engaging and vocal storyteller.

Ron Weinstock



DEB RYDER
Enjoy the Ride
VIZZTONE

A new release from the husky-voiced blues singer and songwriter continues along the same lines of her last recording "Grit Grease & Tears." Like that one, she contributed all the songs and Tony Braunagel did the production, Johnny Lee Schell engineered (and played guitar on most of this) and husband Ric Ryder is executive producer as well as plays bass on four of the thirteen tracks.

The core of the band on this recording also includes Mike Finnigan on keyboards, Pieter van/der Plujim aka Big Pete on harmonica and Joe Sublett on saxophone. There are several notable guests here including guitarists Chris Cain, Debbie Davies, Kirk Fletcher and Coco Montoya while Big Llou Johnson does a voiceover on one selection.

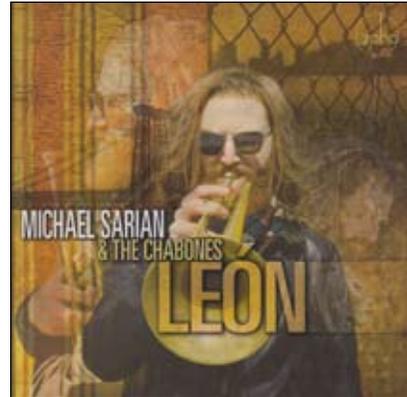
This some hard hitting blues and blues-rock that she sings powerfully but with nuance and a nice sense of vocal dynamics and never comes off as sounding shrill and emoting. Production and backing is first-rate and there is considerable variety in the nature of the songs which are wonderfully performed. One of the stand-out tracks is a strong slow blues duet with Finnigan to which Montoya adds heat with his guitar. Kirk Fletcher adds some Texas styled guitar fire while Big Pete adds some strong harmonica on the rollicking shuffle "Temporary Insanity," while the Bo Diddley beat is mixed in the gospel blues, "What Do You Want From Me," with a catching, captivating performance.

The title track is a strong blues-rock number with its memorable bass and drum riff and some high register harp from Big Pete, as well as strong vocal duet trading verses with Chris Cain (who also adds tough guitar) against a crisp animated groove. Then Ryder takes us to New Orleans on "Sweet Sweet Love," with nice tempo shifts, a strong Debbie Davies guitar solo

and with Big Pete and Sublett being a horn section here. "Forever Yours" is a lovely blues ballad with a touch of the Islands in the backing with a low-key vocal and nice slide guitar from Schell.

Once again Deb Ryder impresses as a songwriter and a convincing, powerful singer. The production and backing she receives contributes to this latest memorable recording by her.

Ron Weinstock



MICHAEL SARIAN AND THE CHABONES

León
ZOHOMUSIC

Born in Canada, raised in Canada and now living in Brooklyn, composer, brass player and bandleader Michael Sarian leads his band of 'Dudes' (Chabone is Argentine slang for dudes) on his third album and his Zoho Music debut. The band is comprised of Sarian (trumpet, flugelhorn, vocals, mini moog, synth), Jim Piela (alto/soprano sax), Evan Francis (tenor sax), Elad Cohen (trombone), Michael Verselli (piano/keyboards), Trevor Brown (bass), Josh Bailey (drums/auxiliary percussion), and special guest Franco Pinna (bombo legüero), and they handsomely perform Sarian's five compositions (one selection is a remix of one of these tracks).

Generally these compositions employ Latin American rhythms that are smoothly negotiated. Sarian is a ginger and one might think the title track (translated as lion) might speak to this, but he states the title refers to anyone who grows into who they are as the band blurs the line between duple and triple meter with Piela's alto featured but the backing and the scoring of the other horns is of particular note. Drummer Bailey is featured on "No. 3" with the band laying out chords in the backing as well as the employment of electronics to create the atmosphere here. "Casquito" illustrates his drafting of simple themes that the ensemble develops before his trumpet solo with Sarian's use of half-valve effects for slurs and moans in the manner of Rex Stewart and Lester Bowie. Piela weaves in a soprano sax counterpoint with the rest of the group joining in and Bailey taking a solo later in the performance.

Sarian's romanticism is most evident on "Your Words" that opens with Verselli's delicate, deliberate piano before Sarian's haunting flugelhorn and the other

horns add their evocative lyricism as well as intriguing interplay with the electronics that are very effectively employed and help build the performance's musical temperature which also features Francis' with a' robust tenor sax solo which leads to its uplifting close. "Colorado Yeta" (roughly translated as bad luck ginger) is what Sarian himself terms "the more introspective track almost like a ballad ..." with restrained, poignant flugelhorn set against a somewhat spare accompaniment.

The album closes with "No 3 (Locus St. Remix)" (Locus Street is the location of the studio) where they took out the drums and horns added special effects for some interesting electronic music, that is kind of an extra track, but not the reason that folks will listen to Michael Sarian and the Chabones which is the splendid ensemble jazz with a Latin American accent heard on the bulk of this recording.

Ron Weinstock



GRETCHEN AND THE PICKPOCKETS

Falling Rising
PICKPOCKET RECORDS

Described as a soul/jazz/rock band, Gretchen and the Pickpockets present a fresh musical sound led by the singing of Gretchen Klempa who leads this band with her brother bassist Mike Klempa. The rest of the band consists of Ryan O'Connell on trumpet and guitar, Tom O'Connell on drums and percussion, Richie Smith on guitar and Diego Tunjano on saxophone with some other brass added to this recording. Based out of Boston, they have been active in New England since 2013.

They are heard on ten originals that have a strong jazz feel manifested by Gretchen's lithe, but sultry, vocals and the loosely structured backings that allow a certain amount of improvisation in these oft atmospheric performances. Gretchen sings subtly but vibrantly, with clarity and subtle shifts in phrasing in her heartfelt delivery of the lyrics. Ryan O'Connell's trumpet makes his presence heard in short solos and obligatos to the vocals on the opening "Keep Talking," and the longing she expresses on "Love You Forever."

The low-key support on "Easy on My Heart" provides an apt setting for her plea to her lover to stay, while there is a country-tinge to her vocal on "Devil's

Due." Its melody hints at The Eagles' "Take It To The Limit," while it also has a handsome horn arrangement. "Let Me Do My Thing" has a funky feel with a hint at a New Orleans groove, while "Back And Forth" has a Memphis feel to it. There is plenty of variety here with a jazzy flavor present throughout including "Time and Time Ago," with its frenzied close along with haunting trumpet. This caps a wonderfully played and sublime recording that crosses genre lines to great effect.

Ron Weinstock



PETER LIN
With Respect
LINTET LLC

Trombonist Peter Lin was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana of Taiwanese ancestry. He has studied with jazz luminaries such as Slide Hampton, Curtis Fuller, Conrad Herwig, and Steve Turre and in fact is Hampton's manager. He leads the band, The Lintet, which just released this new album featuring jazz arrangements of Taiwanese and Chinese popular songs along with an original composition and an arrangement of a Hampton blues.

He is joined on this session by a formidable group of musicians including Anthony Nelson Jr. - Tenor Sax, Soprano Sax, & Flute; Anthony Ware - Alto Sax; Benjamin Kovacs - Tenor Sax; James Zollar - Trumpet; Oscar Williams II - Piano; Charlie Sigler - Guitar; Ben Rubens - Bass and either Nic Cacioppo or Winard Harper - Drums.

Listening to this without reading Lin's comments on the source material, this listener was struck about how solid the performances are in the vein of classic Blue Note meets Pacific Jazz and Contemporary sessions. This is a wonderful swinging band, with tight ensembles and rhythm, taut arrangements and inventive, focused solos. While I am not sure who takes the tenor solo on the opening "Forgotten Times," he does display a Coltrane influence in the clean tone while Lin's own swinging, fuzzy tone playing also impresses. Williams dazzles on piano on the opening of (as well as during his solo in) "Sweet As Honey" that also has nice interplay between Nelson's slightly sour soprano and the leader, along with a vibrato-laden sax solo. Lin displays his assured swing and wooly tone during his solo on "The Moon Represents My Heart," with some

imaginative tenor sax here.

Lin's original, "Born Here, From There," has the feel of a jazz waltz and provides an opportunity for bassist Rubens to solo in addition to the leader and pianist Williams and Nelson on tenor sax. Lin provides the arrangement for the lively swing of Slide Hampton's "My Blues" which has Harper on drums while also showcasing saxophonist Ware, trumpeter Zollar and guitarist Sigler in addition to the rest of the studio group with everyone taking couple of choruses. A larger ensemble is also present on "Rose, Rose, I Love You," which in an earlier form was actually a hit for Frankie Laine. Lin's arrangement lends a New Orleans flavor with its second line groove, and Zollar's growling mute playing adding some polyphony during the ensemble horn passages with Lin and Nelson.

On my review download, "Evening Primrose" with some exceptional flute from Nelson, is the closing selection (contrary to the CD booklet which has "Rose, Rose ...") and is evocative of the chamber jazz sound of Chico Hamilton's fifties' Quintet with Eric Dolphy. This wonderful performance completes a most enjoyable, wonderfully played recording that will make Peter Lin's name better known.

Ron Weinstock



FRANK BEY

Back In Business
NOLA BLUE RECORDS

Frank Bey once shared gospel bills with the Soul Stirrers w/ Sam Cooke, the Blind Boys of Alabama and others when singing gospel with his mother. As a teen he opened shows for Otis Redding and after committing himself to the blues, his career progress was undercut by a failing kidney. After several years of dialysis, he had a successful kidney transplant. A couple of years later he started making appearances with the Anthony Paule Band at Biscuits & Blues in San Francisco, and Bey and Paule recorded a couple albums together, and I called "Soul For Your Blues" a terrific recording.

It has been about four years since Bey's last recording and he returns with this new disc that is produced by Tom Hambridge. Hambridge is best known for producing Buddy Guy's recent recordings, and plays drums and is quite a songwriter. Producing this in Nashville, he enlisted Delbert McClinton's guitarist Rob McNeely, keyboardist Marty Sammon, and bass-

ist Tommy McDonald with horns and backing vocals also present.

Hambridge brings more of a blues-rock feel to these performances which lack some of the supple quality that Paule's band provided. Bey is still in strong voice as is evident from his first words sung on the title track which would have benefited from a bit of restraint from McNeely's blues-rock fire. Much better is the funky "Gun Toting Preacher," with Bey strongly spinning a story of a notorious character set against punchy horns although again McNeely overplays. Then there is smoldering soul blues on "Take It Back To Georgia," again with a superb vocal. Bey and band then throw in some funk with "Cookie Jar," which is followed by the strong southern soul ballad, "The Half Of it," with solid straight-forward backing. There is also a solid reworking of Mighty Sam McCain's "Where You Been So Long," on a performance that builds in intensity with Sammon and the horns contributing to the heat. McNeely's screaming guitar licks actually sound in place.

Other songs include a rocking shuffle "Better Look Out," the topical "Ain't No Reason" with its understated backing, a driving uptempo R&B groover, "Blame It On Mother Nature," and the funky blues "Give It to Him," where McNeely's Albert Collins influenced licks are enhancing Bey's vocal. This latter song was one of several written here by Jeff Monjack, guitarist in Bey's Philadelphia based-band. The album closes with "Yesterday's Dreams," as Bey pulls out all the stops in his soul-drenched vocal while McNeely again plays strongly.

If I have some mixed feelings about the backing Bey receives on some of this album, these flaws do not diminish the overall appeal of this superb soul-blues singer.

Ron Weinstock



AL BASILE

Me & The Originator
SWEETSPOT

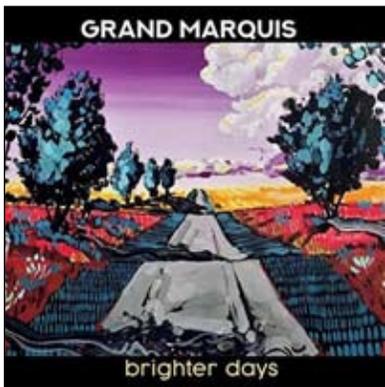
I've been driving around for a couple weeks listening to this disc and this critique will come off as a word to the wise instead of being a review. I've examined Al Basile's releases in the past and found them pretty good for the most part (hey with Duke Robillard on guitar, you really can't go wrong). This one, however, has a

dozen tunes alternating tracks with thirteen spoken stories that go 1-3 minutes each. It's going to depend how much you like repeat listenings of them. After a couple times in the car, I just started skipping over them to get back to the music. A wiser idea would have been a double disc set, one for the music, one for the chatter.

"Poor Boy's Day" has a nice guitar opening, I assume by Duke Robillard, as "My J-O-B" is faster and led via the horns of tenor sax/Doug James, trumpet/Jeff "Doc" Chanonhouse and Al Basile on cornet, with a solo by the latter. "Lefty's Nine Lessons" has a baseball and gospel feel to it (some consider baseball a religious experience) again led by the horns and Duke Robillard's guitar. Basile gets another solo on "Here Comes Your Trouble" with an assist from Bruce Bears' piano. "I Forgot How to Care" has some funk to it while "First One To Go" is what I'd dub shuffle blues. Robillard throws some flamenco riffs into "So Wrong For So Long" as "All Right" is a good example of slow blues.

If you've had Al Basile releases in the past, this is a different animal. It will most appeal to folks who go to their library and take out audio books to listen to while home or driving around. To me, I found the format annoying.

Peanuts



GRAND MARQUIS
Brighter Days
GRAND MARQUIS MUSIC

Formed in the 1990s in Kansas City as a jump blues and swing band, Grand Marquis has established themselves as an institution in the region while morphing perhaps into a band mixing soul, New Orleans grooves and pop flavors that might be (as a reference point) likened to Blood, Sweat and Tears, crossed with New Orleans brass bands. I say that because this writer would not describe this new release, their eight album, as a blues album. But that description is not a comment on the merits of Grand Marquis or this recording.

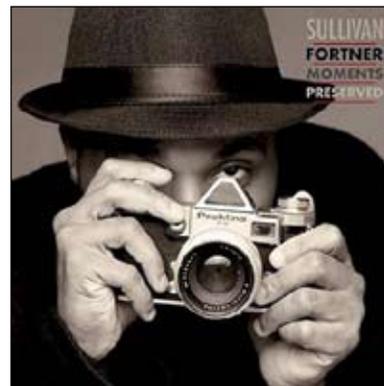
The driving six-piece horn band is comprised of Bryan Redmond (lead vocals and saxophones), Chad Boydston (backing vocals and trumpet), Trevor Turla (backing vocals and trombone), Ryan Wurtz (guitar), Ben Ruth (backing vocals, uptown bass, and sousaphone), and Fritz Hutchinson (backing vocals and

drums). While the publicity for this release likens Redmond's vocals to David Clayton-Thomas, I found his phrasing more in the vein of Van Morrison, although not quite as limber a singer. Still there is much to enjoy whether in the opening "Another Love," or the title track with a strong trumpet solo as well as some shattering slide guitar. This is a well-rehearsed band with tight horns and a solid rhythm section.

A couple of songs take us musically to New Orleans with the Mardi Gras second-line feel of "Night Shift," where Redmond sings about not worrying about working on the night shift with the horns each strongly soloing as well as letting loose with some New Orleans polyphony with Ruth on sousaphone. After Boydston's strident trumpet, Redmond follows with some twisting clarinet and later some strong tailgating trombone from Turla. More New Orleans flavor can be heard on the brass band styled funk instrumental "It Don't Matter," where all the horns and Wurtz get to solo (Redmond wails on the baritone sax on this). "Ain't No Spark" is a funky number with a call and response between Redmond and the rest of the band with another burly trombone solo by Turla.

There is a reflective interpretation of Jimmy Cliff's "Many Rivers To Cross," with a solid Redmond vocal and a nice arrangement of the brass to help frame his singing here (along with an imaginative trombone solo). A spirited take on the traditional "Down By the Riverside" is given a solid New Orleans brass band styled setting, closing out this very intriguing and entertaining recording.

Ron Weinstock



SULLIVAN FORTNER
Moments Preserved
IMPULSE

I was aware of pianist Sullivan Fortner from recorded accompaniments to vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant. The New Orleans-bred pianist and composer has a gem of a new recording that certainly should delight many. With a career that has already had him playing with McLorin Salvant, as well as Roberta Gambarini; trumpeters Roy Hargrove (in whose band he was in for 8 years), Etienne Charles, and Ambrose Akinmusire; and guitarists John Scofield and Peter Bernstein, he sparkles on this recording with a trio that includes bassist Ameen Saleem (who played with

him in Hargrove's band for seven years) and drummer Jeremy "Bean" Clemons. It also includes a couple of numbers with Hargrove.

There is a range of material including standards, imaginative interpretations of themes from television shows and poignant originals, starting with the lively rendition of "Changing Keys," the theme of TV's "Wheel of Fortune." Fortner's touch, inventiveness and his articulation might suggest Barry Harris who he studied with, but he is no Harris clone while the rhythm section is right on. Bud Powell's influence through Barry Harris' mentoring is evident on Fortner's original "Pep Talk," which also has the spotlight on Saleem and Clemons. "Elegy For Clyde Kerr" is an alluring ballad that was dedicated to the late New Orleans trumpeter and educator with Fortner's thoughtful, restrained playing complemented by the rhythm. Bassist Saleem composed and kicks off "Beans and Cornbread," with its jaunty melody, Fortner's spirited playing as well as Saleem's own strongly played solo.

Roy Hargrove, on flugelhorn, joins the ensemble for a hauntingly lovely rendition of Elmo Hope's ballad, "Eyes So Beautiful As Yours," followed an exquisite reading of Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood." Fortner's original "Barbara's Strut" displays echoes of Monk and Bud Powell and followed by a dazzling, Tatum-esque rendition of "Just in Time." Saleem and Clemons both are featured on this breakneck performance. Then Fortner takes us to the Caribbean with the jubilantly performed calypso, "New Port," followed by his solo impressionistic interpretation of Earth Wind & Fire's "Fantasy," with its mix of cascading passages and dissonance.

Other performances include a marvelous duet with Roy Hargrove on "Monk Medley" which was comprised of Monk's "Ask Me Now" and "Monk's Mood." Fortner's beautiful solo rendition of a traditional gospel hymn, "The Solid Rock," also displays his taste as well as technique. It is simply another wonderful performance on this excellent recording.

Ron Weinstock



TRUDY LYNN
Blues Come Knockin'
 CONNOR RAY MUSIC

A new release from the Houston Blues Queen has her performing some classic songs along with the title track, which she wrote. On this Rock Romano production, she is supported by Steve Krase – harmonica;

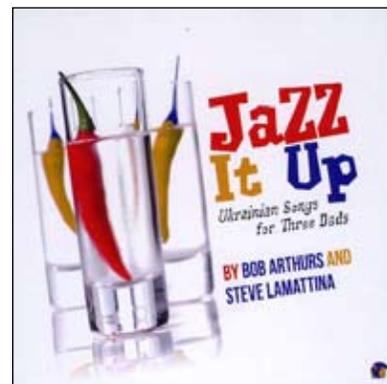
David Carter – guitar; Randy Wall, keyboards; Terry Dry – bass; Matt Johnson – drums; Jim Brady – trumpet; and Dan Carpenter – sax; with special guests Bob Lanza and Carolyn Wonderland on guitar.

Lynn is in good voice and the veteran realizes that subtle shifts in timbre or volume make up for forced bellowing, and solidly backed throughout she does nice personal renditions of a couple of Big Maybelle recordings, "One Monkey Don't Stop No Show" and "Pitiful." The latter is an especially strong performance and benefits from Bon Lanza's hot guitar as well as Steve Krase's harmonica embellishments. Lanza is also present on the rollicking rock and roll of the opening track "Blues Ain't Nothin'," which is led off by Krase's harmonica with Wall taking a honky tonk solo with Lanza's guitar, a mix of blues runs and Chuck Berry licks.

A surprising cover here is of the Three Dog Night song "Never Been To Spain," that displays again how good a singer she is and her mastery of vocal dynamics, with Krase's harmonica also welcome here. Horns are present on a strong rendition of Big Bill Broonzy's "When I Been Drinkin'," sung with humor and vitality along with growing trumpet from Jim Brady and Dan Carpenter's booting tenor sax. After a fine cover of Deanna Bogart's "Won't Be Long" (with Wall's boogie inflected piano and Krase's harmonica), this album closes with a heartfelt rendition of Etta James' soulful lament "Would It Make Any Difference To You," with especially fine guitar contributed by Carolyn Wonderland.

On "Blues Come Knockin'," Trudy Lynn, sings superbly on a variety of classic songs that have not been recorded to death. Backed by real good players, she has produced another noteworthy blues recording.

Ron Weinstock



BOB ARTHURS AND STEVE LAMATTINA
Jazz It Up - Ukrainian Songs For Three Dads
 BLUE GRIFFIN RECORDING

This collaboration between brass player Arthurs and guitarist Lamattina came from a suggestion from their producer Irena Portenko, who is Ukrainian, to record some popular Ukrainian folk melodies. This is apparently the third such collaboration between Arthurs and Lamattina who are both on the faculty of

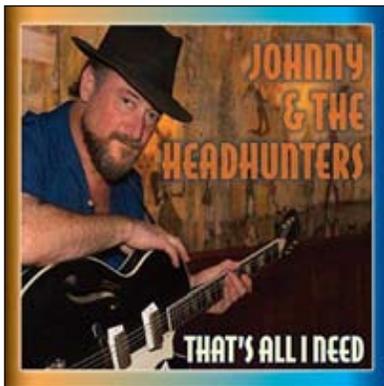
the Music Conservatory of Westchester in White Plains, NY. Both also have active playing careers.

This is an album of bright, sometimes wistful, melodically oriented music as they adapt, state the musical theme and then add embellishments to the various folk songs here. Arthurs plays primarily in lower and middle range while Lamattina chords in accompanying him while taking lyrically rooted single note solos as on the opening “Blackthorn is in Blossom.” “Marigolds My Mother Planted” opens with a plaintive quality to Arthurs’ muted trumpet with Lamattina’s deliberate accompaniment and the bittersweet trumpet tone remains even as there is a shift to a slightly brisker tempo. The performance is lovely as is the subsequent selection “My Dear Mother” with more spare trumpet lending perhaps a nostalgic flavor that Arthurs enhances with his wordless vocal. In contrast there is a bit of playfulness on “Hutzel Girl Ksenia,” with overdubbed brass.

Arthurs sings in Ukrainian on “Moon in the Sky,” and several other songs including “Walking Around the Garden.” His simple singing has a definite charm. His vocals and trumpet solos are effectively supported by Lamattina, while “Kyiv Waltz” is appealing with Arthurs’ slightly crusty-sounding flugelhorn. “Why Haven’t You Come” is a short piece with a wordless vocal and some stately played trumpet and guitar. The album closes with an Arthurs original “Blues For Ukraine,” with a vocal in English with lyrics that hints about the troubles in the Ukraine but that the land is lovely and people are so fair. It is briskly played and has a some fine guitar.

This is a most charming recording. There is much love of the songs evident in the performances that are performed with restraint perhaps, but also with much feeling.

Ron Weinstock



JOHNNY & THE HEADHUNTERS

That's All I Need
SELF-PRODUCED

Washington DC radio personality Steve Hoffman observes that “There are flashier Guitar players around, but no DC area blues band that gets into that soulful blues groove like this trio does.” I may not agree that no DC area band does what Johnny & the Headhunters does, but they certainly do indeed hit some soulful grooves here. Formerly Louisiana Red’s lead guitarist,

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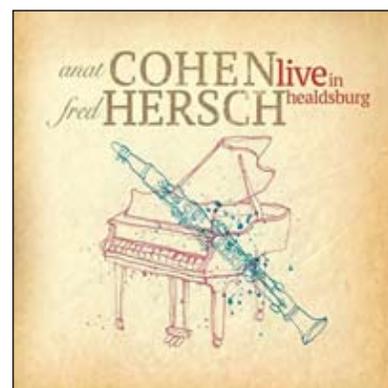
Johnny Ticktin’s vocals and guitar are supported by Brian McGregor, Steve Shaw, Pete Kanaras and El Toro Gamble on bass; Clark Matthews, El Toro Gamble or Robbie McGruder on drums; and Tam Sullivan on keyboards, with Dru Lore adding guitar to one selection.

Ticktin has put together a nice mix of rarely rerecorded songs that are sung and played with restraint. This is evident on the opening title track, a nicely rendered cover of Magic Sam’s title track, sung with grit yet restraint, and then followed by a similarly appealing rendition of “Lead Me On,” from the Bobby Bland songbook, again with a similar enticing soulful vocal. I do not believe I have heard many covers of Johnny Adams’ recording “Body and Fender Man” (written by Duke Robillard and Doc Pomus). Ticktin again delivers a fine vocal and Sullivan’s organ adds to the quality of the performance.

There is some rockabilly feel on “Chicken House,” which is followed by a nice shuffle groove on Lowell Fulson’s “Rock ‘Em Dead.” Ticktin opens his treatment of “Shake Your Money Maker” playing slide sounding like J.B. Hutto on speed. His high adrenalin playing will get folks boogieing. It is followed by the reverb-heavy garage band tribute to Link Wray, “Ace of Spades,” again displaying his taste and thoughtful playing. “Watch and Chain (Hey Gyp)” is credited to Donovan, but is the same song as “Chevrolet,” an old Jim Kweskin Jug Band duet between Geoff and Maria Muldaur. Liz Springer joins this for a delightful vocal duet which is set against a punchy Bo Diddley groove.

After another solid, wonderfully sung and played performance of a Magic Sam song, “All My Whole Life,” the album closes with a Latin-tinged tribute to Albert Collins, “Collins Mambo,” where Ticktin incorporates some of the Telecaster legend’s riffs and tone. This marvelous recording shows that one can play and sing with restraint and yet deliver fervent, soulful music, and hits such strong grooves in doing so.

Ron Weinstock



ANAT COHEN & FRED HERSCH

Live at Healdsburg
ANZIC RECORDS

This album of duets (actually musical conversations) by the marvelous clarinetist and pianist was recorded in June 2106 at the Raven Performing Arts Theater in Healdsburg, California as part of the Healdsburg Jazz Festival. It must have been a delightful per-

formance as heard here with the delightful interplay throughout the eight compositions in this intimate context. Hersch contributed three tunes, Cohen one, and there are four covers.

Hersch's "A Lark" is the first track which allows Cohen's singing clarinet to dance over the textures Hersch lays down before his own explorations. It is followed by another delightful Hersch original, "Child's Song," glowing with the clarity and inventiveness of their playing. The overall tone here and throughout the performances is restrained elegance. Cohen's "The Purple Piece" displays the way the pair employs dynamics in unhurriedly building the intensity here. Then there is an enchanting rendition of Billy Strayhorn's "Isfahan," and Hersch's understated lyricism complements Cohen's explorations from a deep, warm chalumneau register to the upper altissimo. Hersch's "Lee's Dream" finds them in a more playful mood followed by a lovely, ruminative rendition of "The Peacocks." Then there is Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz" played with a restrained buoyancy with Cohen's swirling clarinet flights set against rumbling riffs.

Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo" served as the concert's encore with Cohen's playing displaying the warmth she invests in her playing complemented by Hersch's spare accompaniment. It is a delightful close to the beautiful musical conversations that the two performed that night.

Ron Weinstock



MARIE KNIGHT
The Gospel Truth Live
M.C. RECORDS

A surprise is this posthumous concert recording by the late great Gospel singer, Marie Knight. Knight was then one of the last great singers from the Golden Age of Gospel (1940-1960), who may be known for association with Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the nationally famous gospel singer-guitarist, who she met in 1946. The two became gospel's preeminent duo of the 1940s, recording hits for Decca Records, including "Didn't It Rain," "Up Above My Head," and the gorgeous "Beams of Heaven." By the late 1940s, Marie and Rosetta had split to pursue separate musical projects—Marie to do solo gospel work on Decca.

Tharpe and Knight still reunited frequently on stage during the 1950s, however. In addition to singing be-

fore thousands of gospel fans in Washington, DC in 1950, and touring with up-and-coming gospel vocalist Wynona Carr in 1954. In the 1960s, Marie cultivated a rhythm-and-blues career, touring with the likes of Brooke Benton, the Drifters, and Clyde McPhatter. After a hiatus, she re-emerged in the mid-1970s to record gospel music. After recording a song on a Sister Rosetta Tharpe tribute album, she recorded an album of the gospel songs of Rev. Gary Davis titled "Let Us Get Together" which came out on M.C. Records in June 2007 and was the last studio album she recorded.

The posthumous "The Gospel Truth Live" was recorded October 19, 2007 at a Gospel Festival at the Church Street Center in North Adams MA. As noted in Bill Carpenter's liner notes, it was a wet and overcast day when she first met with students at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and then headlined the school's Gospel Fest. She was accompanied only by pianist Dave Keyes on a program that is mainly drawn from the songbooks of Tharpe and Davis (not surprising since Knight's album of Davis songs had been released a few months earlier) interspersed with her introductions and parables about life, including a moving reminiscence of performing in California and learning her mother and two children perished in a fire and having to sing between the tears.

Certainly a good portion of the songs will be familiar including "Didn't It Rain" and "Up Around My Head" from her days with Sister Rosetta Tharpe (and the latter number seems very popular today), along with "I Belong to the Band," "12 Gates to the City," "I Am the Light of the World," and "Let Us Get Together," from Reverend Gary Davis. Then she mixes in traditional spiritual numbers like "Jesus Loves Me," "I'll Fly Away," "Closer Walk With Thee (on which Keyes sings) and "For Thine is the Kingdom." Keyes generally provides a stately, sometimes barrelhouse rooted, boogie backing that supported her wonderful singing, that belied her age of 87 at the time. Time had little affected the power she could invest her nuanced vocals with.

Less than two years later she would pass away, and a cherished voice was silenced. Not having the pleasure of seeing her perform, I can appreciate the honesty and passion of the music here. Thanks to Mark Carpentieri for producing this and making this wonderful release available.

Ron Weinstock

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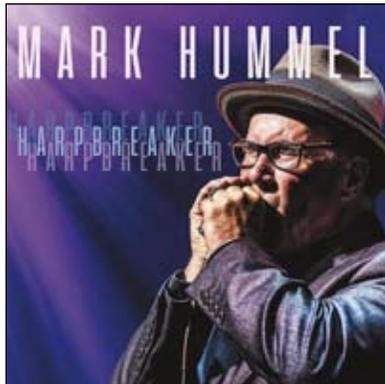
JAKE HERTZOG AND YISHAI FISHER

Stringscapes
FRET MONKEY RECORDS

Classical guitarist Yishai Fisher and jazz guitarist and educator Jake Hertzog literally combine sounds in a highly engaging chamber jazz session; the contrast of nylon and steel strings a constant in the forefront. Laid out as a single four-suite composition, the two players' interaction is a continuous feast of fluidity and structural evolution, each partner exploring harmonic, textural and counter-rhythmic options.

What results is a duo set of a very high caliber, never staying in one place for very long and rarely predictable, if at all.

Duane Verh



MARK HUMMEL

Harpbreaker
ELECTRO-FI

On this all instrumental recording, veteran harmonica wizard Mark Hummel has collected 13 performances from 2004 to this year from live performances and studio sessions. In addition to Hummel's vibrant, full-bodied harmonica playing, there is a variety of musicians backing including in part guitarists Charles Wheal, Billy Flynn, Anson Funderburgh, Charles Baty, Chris Andersen and Rusty Zinn; keyboardists Bob Welsh, Mel Brown, Aaron Hammermann, Sid Morris and Chris Burns; bassists Steve Wolf, RW Grigsby; and drummers and percussionists Marty Dodson, Dave Eagle, Wes Starr, June Core, and Willie Panker. There are horns on one track.

Often all instrumental blues albums are best taken

a few tracks at a time, but Hummel has put together such a variety of tunes, tempos and variations in accompaniment in a set of swinging performances where one's attention does not tire while listening through. He does say he doesn't include many chromatic sides as they are on the jazzier side and will have to wait for a jazz CD. However, he does a nice rendition of Duke Pearson's "Cristo Redentor" that many will be familiar from Charlie Musselwhite. There is also outstanding guitar from Kid Andersen as well on this. Also on the jazzy side is the hard driving, live recording of Buddy Rich's "Rotten Kid," with some very strong sax-like harmonica along with Wheal's fine guitar, and Horace Silver's "Senor Blues" with Hummel joining the horns for the statement of the tune's them, before his own dynamic, twisting solo.

There is raucous, high energy, jet-speed opening "Harpoventilatin'," as well as a jaunting take on Lee Allen's "Walkin' With Mr. Lee," and an extended rendering of Little Walter's "Crazy Legs," all displaying Hummel's fat tone and crisp, swinging backing. With all this excellent music, a favorite performance is "Ready, Steady Stroll!," with its relaxed, strolling groove with Jack Wilson's "Glide On," a touch jazzier performance with Rusty Zinn's exquisite guitar and Burns' piano standing out in addition to Hummel's wonderful harmonica. Then there is a bit of down-home flavor on a cover of Baby Boy Warren's "Chuckaluck" with Dave Eagle on washboard and Aaron Hammermann on piano followed by a straight cover of an early Muddy Waters' instrumental, "Evans Shuffle," with just Rusty Zinn's guitar and RW Grisby's bass backing his channeling of Little Walter.

As suggested above, besides the wonderful harmonica and the strong backing musicians, the variety of material and the sequencing of the performances result in this marvelous recording. *Ron Weinstock*



JOHN COLIANNI

I Never Knew
PATUXENT MUSIC

Renowned for his work as accompanist for Mel Tormé and Les Paul among others, pianist Colianni leads a sextet for a swing rooted recording. His prior recordings featured a two guitar quintet but the present

sextet is fronted by tenor saxophonists Grant Stewart and John David Simon, with guitarist Matt Chertkoff, bassist Ralph Hamperian and drummer Bernard Linette completing the rhythm section. John Colianni sees this sextet as an offshoot of his big band, the John Colianni Jazz Orchestra. "It's sort of a band within a band, reflecting my admiration for the Ellington and Goodman small groups." Also the two tenor aspect has its precedent, not simply in Frank Foster and Frank Wess, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Johnny Griffin, and Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt as Rusty Hassan observes in his annotation, but the great Count Basie Band of the thirties and early forties with the contrasting styles of Lester Young and Herschel Evans/Buddy Tate. Stewart and Simon have similar contrasting styles, and both are driving players with an affinity for the blues.

Colianni is a pianist rooted in the Hines-Wilson-Tatum piano lineage, who also displays awareness of more modern harmonic approaches and is a wonderful accompanist on the four originals and four covers that include the opening title number that was memorably performed by Louis Armstrong, Tommy Dorsey, Frank Sinatra and Count Basie. Basie recorded it for Columbia and two new location recordings from the Famous Door were issued as part of the recent release of materials from the Savory Collection. Colianni's rendition is swinging and the tenor players acquit themselves although they don't match Young nor is the rhythm section quite as propulsive as Basie's legendary one, but it is a swinging small group and the leader displays a deft touch. A Beethoven adaptation, *Fur Elise*, displays his incorporation of stride piano as well on this clever performance.

"I Didn't Know About You" is a Duke Ellington number that Colianni played behind Tony Bennett and is a lovely composition with a finely developed solo with the tenor saxes adding color. Guitarist Chertkoff gets to shine on a solid blues, "Blues For Naomi" which he observed was a tribute to "a lady who used to watch over us young players cutting our teeth at One Step Down in Washington, DC, where I grew up," and both saxophonists acquit themselves strongly. Illinois Jacques's "Achtung" is what might be called a barn-burner with the two taking off here as if Lockjaw Davis and Johnny Griffin with Colianni's intro and stride-rooted comping evoking the early Basie.

A competitor in the first Thelonious Monk competition, Colianni and group tackles Monk's "Little Rootie Tootie," which seems taken from the Hal Overton Town Hall Concert arrangement with strong solos from Stewart and Simon before Colianni develops his own, well conceived solo and is followed by some fine playing from Chertkoff. If this does not break new grounds, it is a strongly played mainstream small group jazz session that will appeal to many. Ron Weinstock



ARIANNA NEIKRUG

Changes
CONCORD JAZZ

Winner of the 2015 Sarah Vaughan International Vocal Competition Arianna Neikrug has her Concord Jazz debut backed by a trio produced by Grammy-winning pianist and arranger Laurence Hobgood along with his regular trio mates – drummer Jared Schonig and bassist Matt Clohesy. Musically, this release displays Neikrug's gift for interpreting tunes from the Great American Songbook, more recent pop and R&B classics from the '70s as well as two originals she wrote.

On first hearing, Neikrug's soprano suggested to me the young Canadian singer Nikki Yanofsky. That is simply a reference point as Neikrug quickly displays on the opening "No Moon At All," her command of her voice, clear phrasing, sense of dynamics and her wonderful scattling.

Hobgood initially provides spare accompaniment before the full trio enters for the swinging performance. Hobgood's arrangement for "Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most," is among her favorites. Her vocal captures the lyrics' meaning and there is some wonderful piano. Another highlight is the wonderful reworking of the Al Green classic "Let's Stay Together," which is slowed down adding to the poignancy of the lyrics and the plea to her lover.

Her songwriting is spotlighted on the title track with its lithe samba rhythm and as she sings about negotiating a tough period in her life. Her vocal includes marvelous wordless passages and delightful backing. A mashup of "Never Let Me Go/I'll Be There," opens as a lament of her and Hobgood of the Evans and Livingston standard, followed by the full trio backing her on a ballad reading of the Jackson Five hit. Neikrug cleanly and precisely sings Hammerstein and Kern's "The Song is You," which is taken at a torrid tempo, and transforms the century old "After You're Gone" into a R&B tinged lament. The album closes with a most entertaining mash-up of a couple of Joni Mitchell songs "Help Me/ Be Cool."

This is a marvelous debut by an already accomplished vocalist who is sympathetically backed by Hobgood and his trio. One expects to hear more about Arianna Neikrug in the future.

Ron Weinstock

jazz-blues.com



RUSS GREEN
City Soul
 CLEOPATRA RECORDS

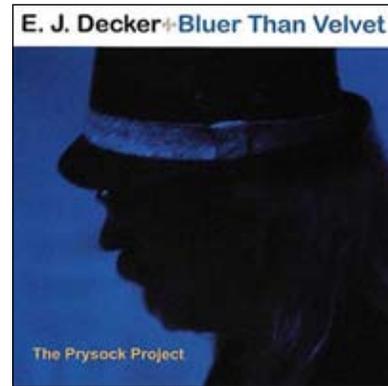
Russ Green is a name that I remember as one of the players on the Chicago Blues Harmonica Project albums. This Chicago native has an interesting career that has seen him becoming involved in film production as well as music. His harmonica playing shows the influence of Sugar Blue and Billy Branch and on this debut album he wrote all of the songs (one in collaboration with Eric Bibb). He is backed by a band that includes Giles Corey on guitar, Marvin Little on bass, Ricky Nelson on drums, Vince Agwada on slide guitar and Joe Munroe on the Hammond B3, with Eric Bibb singing an adding acoustic guitar on one selection.

There is some hot music to be heard here, starting with the hyper-kinetic boogie, "First Thing Smokin'" with Agwada's slide guitar adding to a near frantic pace. Green certainly has no problem with the tempo whether his blazing harp playing and his soulful singing and one is struck by the clarity of his phrasing. "Believe in Love" has a more relaxed, reggae-tinged groove as again he impresses with his singing as well as his horn-like harp playing, set against a crisp, low-key backing. The longest track here is "The Edge," a funky blues that opens with his wet, full-bodied harp before he sings about empty bottles on the table and floor with his mind shaking dealing with poverty and staying on the edge with a razor blade and no shoes on his feet.

Eric Bibb joins on "Goin' Down South," where the two share the vocal to see where their people come from, where they live the blues, and see the ghost of ole Jim Crow. Green's harp playing here is a bit more down-home, owing a more to Billy Branch here, while Bibb takes an acoustic guitar solo. Munroe is more prominent on the funky blues "Lover Man," with more fat-toned harp playing, while a stark bass figure underlies the topical "Train of Pain." There is a bluesy rock flavor to "Somethin' New," with some slide guitar adding to the mood here, while the closing "Love to Give," has more of a soul groove.

There is plenty to impress the listener on "City Soul" from Green's very modern blues harp, his relaxed baritone vocals and the solid studio band. Add to the fine playing here, striking original material and one has a memorable debut album.

Ron Weinstock



E.J. DECKER
Bluer Than Velvet: The Prysock Project
 CANDELA RECORDS

Vocalist E.J. Decker pays tribute to one of his major influences, Arthur Prysock on this new release that is devoted to the music of one who Decker terms an "underrepresented, underserved artist." Singing is in Decker's blood and his father replaced Frank Sinatra in the Tommy Dorsey Band, although his father's musical career dried up and he opened up a luncheonette where a young E.J. worked and would turn the dial away from his father's preferred mature fare (WNEW) toward current rock and pop stations. But it was while closing up one day with WNEW on that he heard Prysock and he recalled that "this deep voice came up and scared the crap out of me, ..." Decker has had a lengthy singing career including working on the folk and rock circuit.

Prysock had a deep baritone and first came up with Buddy Johnson's Band with whom he had his first hits in the latter half of the forties. Later, he recorded as a solo artist for Old Town and Verve through the '60s. He later was known in the 70's for a series of iconic TV ads for Löwenbräu beer and even had a disco hit with Gamble & Huff's "When Love Is New." Stephen Holden, in his Prysock obituary for The New York Times, described the singer's "silky growl, with its careworn texture and tone of pillow-talk intimacy." It was the late Mark Murphy, briefly a teacher of Decker's, who urged him to undertake a Prysock project. "I mentioned Prysock and Mark lit up," Decker says. "He understood that nobody had done a proper tribute, ..."

On this tribute Decker is joined by a versatile band that includes baritone saxophonist Claire Daly, trombonist Elizabeth Frascoia, pianist Les Kurtz, guitarist Chris Bergson, bassist Saadi Zain and drummer Tom Melito. The recording includes Prysock hits, both well-known standards and songs that only he recorded. But it also includes songs Prysock did not record: Cole Porter's "Why Can't You Behave," the Gershwin's "He Loves and She Loves," Lerner & Loewe's "On the Street Where You Live." "On these," Decker muses, "I found I was taking the same approach that I heard him take, that in essence he taught me. Though he never sang them himself, they still fit right in."

Decker, like Prysock, is primarily a balladeer and crooner, although his phrasing suggests at times Elvis

Presley as well as Prysock. I found this on the opening “You Had Better Change Your Ways.” Here as elsewhere the backing is exquisite with pianist Kurtz being a most sympathetic accompanist while guitarist Bergson plays fleetly behind him. Clare Daly’s rhapsodic baritone sax, as well as Bergson’s chording and single note fills, add to the pleasure of “Autumn in New York” and the easy swinging arrangement of “What a Difference a Day Makes.” Daly’s solos are superb. Trombonist Frascoia opens “Blue Velvet” and provides an appealing soft growling counter to Decker’s ballad mastery.

Ella Johnson did the original recording of her brother Buddy’s classic “Since I Fell For You,” but it became part of Prysock’s repertoire. Decker’s rendition here is akin to Lenny Welch’s pop hit with more superb solos from Daly and Bergson. There is marvelous interplay between guitarist Bergson and trombonist Frascoia on a strong blues performance, “Its Too Late Baby Too Late.” Among the songs Prysock did not record, Gershwin’s “He Loves and She Loves” has a solid, swinging vocal with outstanding solos from Kurtz on piano and Daly on baritone sax, while a lovely rendition of “When I Fall in Love,” opens as a duet with Zain who initially plays Arco, before Kurtz and Melito (on brushes) join. Zaid’s walking bass line helps begin “On The Street Where You Live,” with the rhythm section playing splendidly.

With the backing throughout from a superb band and guests (Clare Daly especially impresses), E.J. Decker has certainly put forth a worthy tribute that hopefully will restore Arthur Prysock to his place in musical history.

Ron Weinstock



VANESSA COLLIER

Honey Up

PHENIX FIRE RECORDS

After having her second album on Ruf, Vanessa Collier’s latest is a crowd-funded, self-produced CD. The Berklee graduate (with degrees in Performance and Music Production & Engineering) is a threat as a singer, songwriter (she wrote 9 of the ten songs on this), a multi-instrumentalist (playing various saxophones as well as guitar on this) and arranger.

She has recruited quite a group of musicians for this including Nick Stevens on drums and percussion, Nick Trautmann on bass, Sparky Parker on guitar for

several tracks, William Gorman on keyboards, Laura Chavez on guitar (8 of the ten tracks), Quinn Carson on trombone (5 tracks) and Doug Woolverton on trumpet (5 tracks).

Her website notes that she “weaves funk, soul, rock, and blues into every powerful performance,” and that is quite evident on the varied musical program here which includes songs ranging from the opening New Orleans flavored “Sweatin’ Like A Pig, Singin’ Like An Angel,” as she shouts about singing in the Southland where she impresses vocally with her presence along with Laura Chavez blasting out a some hot West Coast blues guitar before taking her funky tenor sax solo in a King Curtis vein then trading fours with Woolverton.

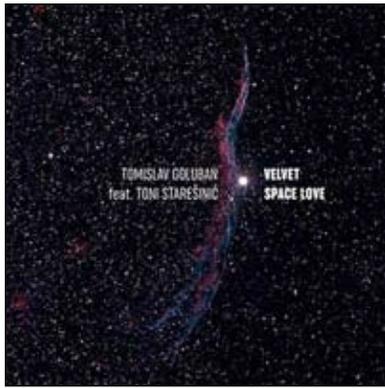
It isn’t simply the performance of her and the core band, but her arrangement of the horns and the production all of which is first-rate on this party track. There is more of a party mood on “Don’t Nobody Got Time To Waste,” with the brassy horns riffing in support set against a jubilant gospel-rooted groove with Gorman cooking grease on organ and her sax soaring against the rest of the band.

The title track is a funky song where she is singing about being held up in her relationship and an other who wants her to “honey up and kiss his behind.” She takes a punchy sax solo while Gorman takes a keyboard solo set against Stevens’ driving drumming. “Percolatin’” is a funky instrumental that showcases her funky R&B sax playing which stands out as it is the solo horn here while bassist Trautmann is spotlighted here as well.

One of the most interesting, and enjoyable songs here is “Icarus” her imaginative telling of the Greek mythological figure playing acoustic guitar (providing a sparse, effective backing) behind her melodious singing and a strong short saxophone solo. It is a change of pace from some of the more hard hitting songs, including “The Fault Line,” with more searing guitar from Laura Chavez along with the hard rocking setting. There is effective employment of resonator guitars by Collier and Parker, along with Chavez’ focused fretwork on “Bless Your Heart.”

There is a touch of country in the vocal on the horn-driven shuffle, “You’re a Pill,” where Chavez shines and her booting solo helps ride this track out. “Making lemonade out of lime can get a little crazy... “ opens up the New Orleans-Ray Charles flavor on “You Get What you Get.”

The album closes with a nice rendition of Chris Smithers’ “Love Me Like a Man,” that opens as a duet with just Parker’s backing before the full band joins in to add punch behind her heartfelt singing and saxophone solo. As a matter of taste, there are a couple songs that I might have preferred a slightly slower tempo or a tad lighter touch on the drums, but I am impressed by Collier as a singer, saxophonist, songwriter and a producer. “Honey Do” is a striking recording that will have strong appeal to many. Ron Weinstock



**TOMISLAV GOLUBAN
FEAT. TONI STAREŠINI**
Velvet Space Love
SPONA

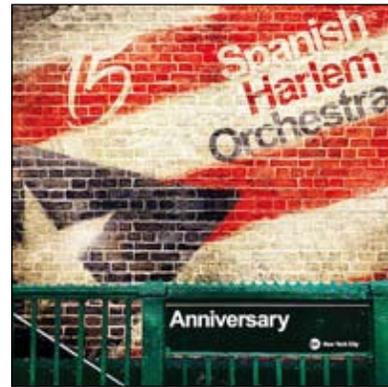
This is an intriguing recording by these two Croatian musicians who perform eight originals, three remixes and one cover. Harmonica player Goluban who comes from a blues background is collaborating here with Starešini, who plays a variety of keyboards here and who is mostly involved in jazz combined with electronic, rock, funk, soul and hip-hop. The publicity for this recording states, “They all combine a classic piano sound, keyboards and a harmonica. In this ‘space dance’ Goluban and Starešini combine blues, jazz and electronic, yet flirting (sic) with other styles.” Various musicians join in on some tracks to help sustain the mood of various selections.

The performances here are soundscapes more so than songs starting with the opening “Zero Gravity” where Goluban’s harmonica lines are set against the electronic sounds of his partner with time seemingly suspended. Vlado Simcich Vana adds guitar tones adding to sound textures of “Space Drive” as Goluban’s horn-like harmonica lines are set against Starešini’s synthesized textures. Goluban adds jewharp and a shaker to his harmonica on the haunting “My Jupiter Mistress,” with a jazzy electronic keyboard solo.

On “Hypersleep Dream,” there is nice bluesy harmonica against a synthesized organ backing as Josipar Loncar adds a wordless vocal moan. Electric and acoustic guitar, and drums are added to another spacey track, “10 9 3,” while “The Busiest Woman I Ever Loved” is a blues instrumental with Goluban’s impressive harmonica playing along with a taut electric piano solo and punchy horns, while “Till the End of Time and Space” is a fascinating duet between harmonica and electronic instruments. “Zero Gravity Remix” sounds like the harp is taken out of the mix and replaced by various electronic sounds.

The album closes with echoey, moody harmonica set against the electronics on a cover of Ennio Morricone’s “Man With a Harmonica,” providing a fresh approach to music that may have been composed for a ‘Spaghetti’ Western. While one can hear the blues roots in Goluban’s accomplished harmonica playing, little

of the fascinating music here could be described as blues. The performances here will appeal most to those interested in electronic music, though some hopefully will sample the sounds here. *Ron Weinstock*



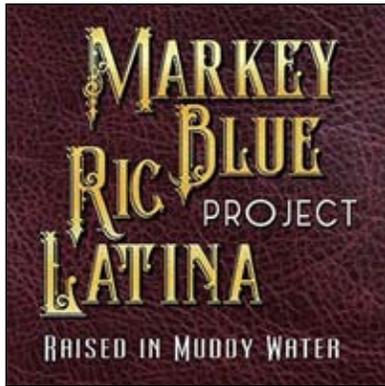
SPANISH HARLEM ORCHESTRA
Anniversary
ARTISTSHARE

The title of the latest recording from the celebrated Latin jazz and salsa band celebrates the Spanish Harlem Orchestra’s 15th year. After decades of session work, composing, arranging and producing, band leader Oscar Hernández was approached by producer Aaron Levinson in 2000 about the idea of assembling and recording Latin jazz orchestra.

The result was “Un Gran Día en el Barrio,” the 2002 debut recording which received a Grammy nomination for Best Salsa Album and a Latin Billboard Award for Salsa Album and led to Hernández and SHO touring and wowing audiences. They have won two Grammy Awards in the years since and continue to dazzle audiences.

Certainly this latest recording will wow listeners with contributions from all the members of this exciting band (with Randy Brecker a guest on one selection). Certainly the opening “Esa Nena” by vocalist Marco Bermúdez and conga player George Delgado gets this very hot recording off. There is plenty of heat, although at a more relaxed tempo on “Yo Te Prometo,” with a volcanic trumpet break and crisp solo while the Latin percussion trio of Delgado, Luisito Quintero on timbales and Jorge González provide the hot rhythmic percolation with the vocalists of Bermúdez, Carlos Cascante and Jeremy Bosch do their spirited singing while Mitch Frohman’s baritone along with Gerardo ‘Jerry’ Madera’s bass helps anchor the performance along while Hernández is superb whether as part of the rhythm section or his imaginative soloing.

Other tracks to note include a couple from Hernández, “Goza El Ritmo” and “Somos Uno,” with the latter featuring some brilliant Randy Brecker trumpet, as well as a lyrical solo from the leader. One could easily cite the other performances well as the Spanish Harlem Orchestra dazzles throughout with the vibrant music that will thrill dancers as well as listeners on this terrific recording.
Ron Weinstock



MARKEY BLUE - RIC LATINA PROJECT

Raised in Muddy Water
ELLERSOUL RECORDS

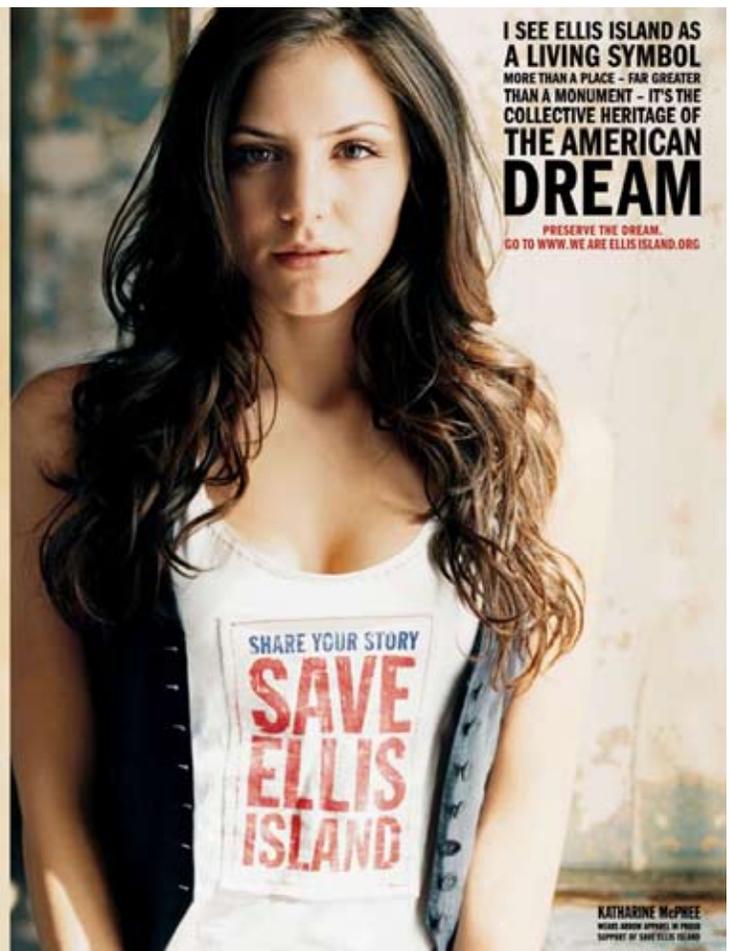
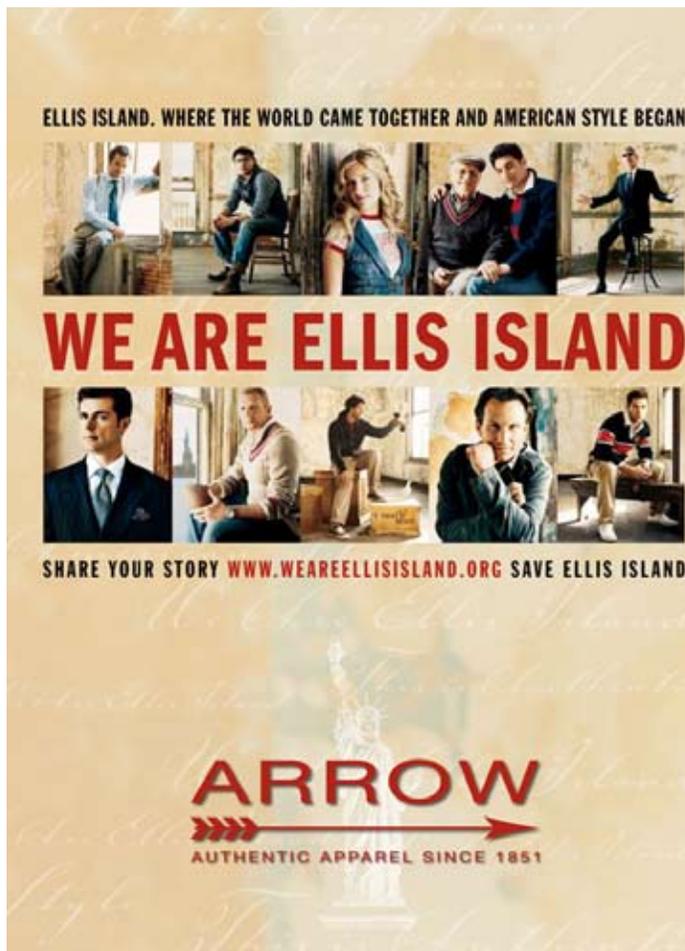
It has been several years that singer Jeannette Markey (Markey Blue) and guitarist Latina impressed on her recording "Hey Hey." About that recording I concluded "There is so much to enjoy about this release from the strong backing, good original songs and Ms. Markey's heartfelt, persuasive vocals. Markey Blue certainly makes fans of blues and soul take note with this." Certainly much can be said about this recording of blues-tinged rock, swampy soul and blues. Listening to the impressive opening title track and "Corinne Shine," I think more of southern rock and Little Feat

than Jimmy Reed and Jody Williams, but that is simply categorizing these finely performed songs. Markey is a really good singer with plenty of heart and Latino is a noteworthy guitarist as he shows behind her very fervent singing on "A Little More I Die (An Ode to John Payne)."

Credit must be given to her backing band of John Marcus on bass, Marcus Finnie on drums, Shannon Winnie on keyboards, Jim Williamson on trumpet and Doug Moffet on saxophone. But the songs are excellent as the afore-mentioned "A Little More I Die," or the driving shuffle "Red Room," on which Ronnie Owens is overdubbed on harmonica, "Mississippi Soul," with Latino's atmospheric Duane Allman styled slide or the rocking boogaloo rocker with Eddie Clearwater and horns added, "I Like It Like This." There is a terrific, moody blues "Walking Over This Line," where Markey sings about a love gone wrong and taking too long to leave.

There is the swampy blues rock of the Delbert McClinton tribute "Come and Go," and the closing bonus track that was recorded live, a lively blue shuffle, "Drowning in His Ocean," as she joyously celebrates a lover. Markey Blue continues to deliver as a singer and songwriter with some strong guitar and excellent backing making for another notable recording.

Ron Weinstock





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