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jazz
& blues report



Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour

jazz & blues report

Editor & Founder

Bill Wahl

Layout & Design Bill Wahl

Operations Jim Martin
Pilar Martin

Contributors

Michael Braxton, Peanuts, Wanda Simpson, Mark Smith, Duane Verh, Emily Wahl and Ron Weinstock.

RIP JBR contributors Tom Alabiso, John Hunt, Chris Colombi, Mark A. Cole, Barbara Fronckowiak & Hal Hill

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Comments...billwahl@jazz-blues.com
Web www.jazz-blues.com

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Our original mascot from the very early Buffalo Jazz Report days – mid '70s. He is older now, but global & still very cool!

Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour

Performing 26 Concerts

March 15–April 14 in 16 States and Canada



MJF On Tour (© R.R. Jones)

Fifth National MJF Group Features Cécile McLorin Salvant, Bria Skonberg, Melissa Aldana, Christian Sands, Yasushi Nakamura, and Jamison Ross

Monterey, Calif.; It's millennials only for the Monterey Jazz Festival's fifth national tour, March 15–April 14, 2019. Featuring some of the most critically-acclaimed, GRAMMY®-winning and GRAMMY-nominated jazz artists of their generation, including three winners of the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition, Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour will truly showcase the next generation of jazz legends, including Cécile McLorin Salvant, vocals; Bria Skonberg, trumpet, vocals; Melissa Aldana, tenor saxophone; Christian Sands, piano and musical director; Yasushi Nakamura, bass, and Jamison Ross, drums, vocals.

As the longest continuously-running jazz festival in the world, Monterey Jazz Festival will expand on its tradition of presenting the best in jazz, and of jazz's younger, international and diverse future in 2019. "This will be the 10-year anniversary of MJF on Tour and it is also one of our most exciting," said Tim Jackson, MJF Artistic Director. "With a strong female presence on the front line with Cécile, Melissa and Bria, and the mastery of Christian Sands as our pianist and musical director, we are looking forward to spreading the joy of jazz, which is the essence of the Monterey Jazz Festival, to rest of the country."

The 31-day tour will perform 26 concerts in 16 states and Alberta, Canada. Highlights include New York City's Jazz at Lincoln Center; Los Angeles' Walt Disney Concert Hall; Berkeley's Cal Performances; Chicago's Symphony Center; Calgary Canada's Jack Singer Concert Hall; and many others.

Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour is produced by Danny Melnick for Ab-January • February 2019 • Issue 382

solutely Live Entertainment (ALE) and booked by The Kurland Agency, which also produced and booked two previous MJF tours in 2013 and 2016. Visit www.montereyjazzfestival.org for more information.

About the Performers....

One of the most acclaimed vocalists of her generation, Cécile McLorin Salvant is the winner of the 2010 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition. Other honors include selection for Jazz Album of the Year by the DownBeat International Critics Poll and NPR, as well as Top Female Vocalist from the Jazz Journalists Association. Cécile grew up in a bilingual household in Miami and traveled to Aix-en-Provence to pursue a degree in French law while training as a classical and baroque singer before switching to jazz. Her last two Mack Avenue releases, *For One to Love* and *Dreams and Daggers*, each won Grammy Awards for Best Jazz Vocal Album. Her newest Mack Avenue release, *The Window*, is an album of duets with pianist Sullivan Fortner. Rolling Stone describes Cécile as "...one of the greatest jazz singers of her generation, but that label sells her short."

Canadian singer, trumpeter and songwriter Bria Skonberg has been described as one of the "most versatile and imposing musicians of her generation" by the Wall Street Journal, recognized as one of 25 for the Future by DownBeat Magazine, and cited as a millennial "shaking up the jazz world" by Vanity Fair. Signed to Sony Music Masterworks' Okeh Records, Bria released her major label debut in 2016, winning a Canadian JUNO award and making the Top 5 on Billboard jazz charts. Her many accolades include Best Vocal and Best Trumpet awards from Hot House Jazz Magazine and DownBeat's Rising Star award. In addition to performing at jazz festivals around the world, Bria is an avid educator, giving numerous workshops and concerts for students of all ages.

Tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana was born in Santiago, Chile, and in 2013, she became the first female instrumentalist and the first South American ever to win the Thelonious Monk Competition. Aldana attended the Berklee College of Music, studying with George Garzone, Danilo Pérez and Patricia Zarate, while hitting the clubs with Greg Osby and George Coleman, among others. She is also a recipient of the Martin E. Segal Award from Jazz at Lincoln Center and is a double recipient of the Altazor Award, Chile's highly prestigious national arts prize. She has released four albums as a leader, including her latest, *Back Home*, on Concord. Melissa "...balances technical bravura with musical depth, a hallmark of her playing," writes the Chicago Tribune.

Pianist and MJF on Tour Music Director Christian Sands is a five-time Grammy nominee. Growing up in New Haven, Connecticut, he started playing professionally at the age of 10, and received his bachelor of arts and master's degrees from the Manhattan School of Music. A protégé of Dr. Billy Taylor, Sands began a six-year association with bassist Christian McBride in

2009, and has followed in Dr. Taylor's footsteps by encouraging, inspiring and advocating for the preservation and history of jazz. In 2015, he started the Jazz Kids of Montmartre in Copenhagen, Denmark; he also teaches at Jazz in July, where he is an alumnus. His second Mack Avenue release, *Facing Dragons*, was reviewed by NPR as a "...crisply assured new album...that expresses new ideas without abandoning the old."

Bassist Yasushi Nakamura is one of the most commanding voices on bass today. Born in Tokyo, Nakamura moved to Seattle, Washington, eventually receiving his bachelor's degree in jazz performance from Berklee College of Music, and an artist diploma from the Juilliard School. He has recorded or performed around the world with Wynton Marsalis, Wycliffe Gordon, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Hank Jones, Dave Douglas, and many others. As an educator, Nakamura has led master classes and summer intensive courses at Juilliard, The New School, Koyo Conservatory, Osaka Geidai, and Savannah Swing Central. Nakamura made his record debut as leader in 2016 with *A Lifetime Treasure*, followed by *Hometown* in 2017.

Grammy-nominated drummer and vocalist Jamison Ross won the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition in 2012. A Jacksonville, Florida native, Jamison received his B.A. in Jazz Studies from Florida State University and his master's from the University of New Orleans. He has toured internationally and recorded with Cécile McLorin Salvant, Jonathan Batiste, Dr. John, Jon Cleary, Christian McBride, and Carmen Lundy. His Concord debut, *Jamison*, was nominated as for a Best Jazz Vocal Album Grammy in 2015, and his latest, *All for One*, was released in 2018. Jamison's "roots in jazz and gospel give him thrilling chops and unflinching feel," writes NPR.

About Monterey Jazz Festival

The Monterey Jazz Festival celebrates the legacy of jazz, expands its boundaries, and provides opportunities to experience jazz through the creative production of performances and educational programs.

Visit www.montereyjazzfestival.org for more information and tour dates/locations. Below is a list of the cities on the tour.

March 2019: New York N.Y., Boston Mass, Troy, N.Y., Bethesda, Md., State College, Pa, Philadelphia, Pa., East Lansing, Mich., Omaha, Neb., Baton Rouge, La., Meridian, Miss., Memphis, Tenn., Fayetteville, Ark.

April 2019: Portland, Ore., Berkeley, Calif., Rohnert Park, Calif., Los Angeles, Calif., Seattle, Wash., Santa Barbara, Calif., Mesa, Ariz., Calgary, Alberta Canada, Chicago, Ill., Ann Arbor, Mich.

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Monterey Jazz Festival Announces Allison Miller and Derrick Hodge as 2019 Artists-in-Residence

Monterey, Calif. - Monterey Jazz Festival is proud to announce that drummer and composer Allison Miller and bassist, composer and producer Derrick Hodge have been selected as the 2019 Monterey Jazz Festival Artists-in-Residence and will work year-round with young musicians in performances and clinics at the 2019 Next Generation Jazz Festival, Summer Jazz Camp Intensive, with the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra, and at the 62nd Monterey Jazz Festival.

"I am very pleased to have Allison and Derrick on board as AIR's for 2019," said Tim Jackson, Monterey Jazz Festival's Artistic Director. "Derrick was on our first MJF on Tour back in 2008 and I have been waiting for chance to deepen our relationship with him ever since. Allison has always caught my ear as a first-call drummer, excellent bandleader, fine composer and an outstanding educator. Together they will bring artistry and excellence to our festival and education programs."

Over the Festival's 60-year history, artists have had an informal role in the production and artistic selection of the festival, including John Lewis, Clark Terry, Dizzy Gillespie, and many others. In 2004, the Artist-in-Residence program was revamped to include educational visits to the Next Generation Jazz Festival and Summer Jazz Camp, and the program has continued to expand year after year.

New York City-based drummer/composer/teacher Allison Miller has been named "Rising Star Drummer" and "Top 20 Jazz Drummers" in DownBeat Magazine's acclaimed Critics Poll. Her band, Boom Tic Boom, is a 2014 recipient of Chamber Music America's "Presenter Consortium for Jazz Grant"; and has been met with critical acclaim, and has been featured on NPR's Tiny Desk Concert, WBGO's The Checkout, and many jazz festivals around the world. Miller is a three-time Jazz Ambassador of the US State Department, conducting clinics and master classes throughout the globe at universities and camps. She has been the rhythmic force behind such artists as Ani DiFranco, Natalie Merchant, the Meredith Vieira Show and Late Night with Seth Meyers, in addition to Dr. Lonnie Smith, Patricia Barber, Marty Ehrlich, Steven Bernstein, Ben Allison, Steve Cardenas, and Ben Goldberg. Miller holds adjunct teaching positions at The New School, Kutztown University, and Jazz Camp West. Miller has performed at the Monterey Jazz Festival in 1998, 2004 and 2006.

Two-time Grammy Award-winning bassist and Blue Note Recording Artist Derrick Hodge attended Temple University and was the first jazz major to participate in their Symphony Orchestra and New Music Chamber Orchestra. His wide range of accomplishments in many

genres include orchestrations and arrangements for Nas with the National Symphony Orchestra, Common, and Kanye West. Hodge has won two R&B Grammys with the Robert Glasper Experiment, and co-produced albums with Quincy Jones and Don Was. Hodge has toured, performed or recorded with Maxwell, Kanye West, Herbie Hancock, Q-Tip, Mos Def, Timbaland, Jill Scott, Musiq Soulchild, Gerald Levert, Common, Bilal, Andre 3000, Sade, Terence Blanchard, Ledisi, Terrell Stafford, Donald Byrd, Stefon Harris, and many others. For Blue Note, Hodge has released *The Second and Live Today*, and has written original music for the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Chicago Brass Ensemble. Some of his many film score credits include *Back to School Mom*, the 180 Days documentary series for PBS, *Land of Opportunity*, *Black Candle*, *The Army Recruiter*, and *Uneasy Listening*. Hodge has performed at the Monterey Jazz Festival multiple times over the years and represented MJF during the 50th Anniversary All-Stars' national tour in 2008.

The 62nd Annual Monterey Jazz Festival will take place on the Monterey County Fairgrounds & Event Center in September 2019, with more than 500 artists performing on 8 stages for 3 nights and 2 days of the world's best jazz.

In 2018, 37,541 people attended the Monterey Jazz Festival.



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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 squaresville.
 They have no rhythm
 And they wear crowns.*



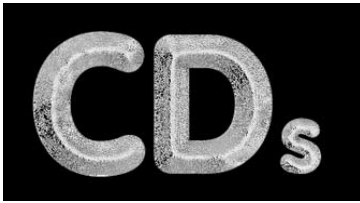
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THE ADAM PRICE GROUP

House Ghosts SELF-PRODUCED

Based in Eastern Pennsylvania, composer and clarinetist Adam Price leads his group on this recording. Others here include pianist Isamu McGregor; bassist Jack Synoski; drummer Spencer Inch and percussionist Jeff Hatcher. Kristina Rajgelj adds vocals to several selections. My download did not include information on composers.

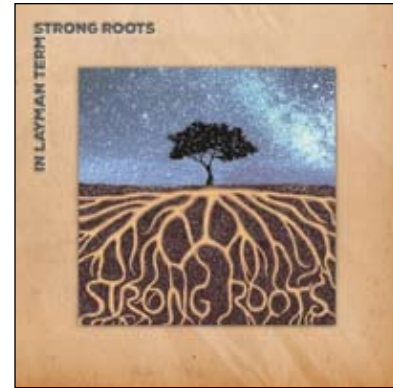
While Price has classical training on clarinet, it does not prevent him from swinging while displaying his warm tone and his fluid attack. The opening “Mzungu” has a strong African-tinged rhythmic groove while “Chameleon Colored Eyes” also has an energetic force reflected in Price’s propulsive playing as well as McGregor’s spirited piano solo. A shortened single cut of this track is tacked on the end of this recording. Rajgelj takes one of her vocals here displaying clear articulation of the song and a horn-like projection of the lyrics while the rhythm section is superb here and throughout.

“The Girl in the White Dress” is a ballad with Price captivating with his playing with understated backing from his fine ensemble. “Rotten Grapes” is an effervescent blues performance with Inch helping propel Price’s solo and followed by McGregor’s thoughtful solo, while “Summer Thunder (The Last Rain Queen)” is a mellow number with Rajgelj’s wordless vocal harmonizing with Price’s pensive clarinet here. Rajgelj also adds wordless vocalizing to the title track that starts reflectively before a lightly swinging groove is established and Price twisting, surging so builds up in intensity.

The delightful “Storyville” has the appeal of an evening stroll on Frenchmen Street, just outside New

Orleans’ French Quarter with the understated bass and drums adding to the performance’s charm. The ebullient Brazilian-flavored “Eu Quero Você follows it,” with Rajgelj adding her wordless singing to the ensemble here. As noted, a single cut of “Chameleon Colored Eyes” closes this recording. Price’s superb, exquisite clarinet playing, along with varied, melodic compositions and a marvelous band has resulted in an excellent recording.

Ron Weinstock



IN LAYMAN TERMS

Strong Roots ENDLESS BLUES RECORDS

This is a follow-up to In Laymen Terms’ debut recording of “Tangled,” I wrote then about the siblings Logan and Cole Layman, “ They are still young, and they are maturing and will continue to develop their musical identity, but they should be congratulated for their accomplishment here.” This new recording displays their further maturation as performers on a set of seven new songs and a cover of the Little Willie John classic, “Fever.” Drummer Nick Davidson and brass from Hamed Barbarji back the bass and vocals of Logan and Cole’s guitar. Djembe Hendrix adds djembe to one selection.

Starting with the opening title track, one hears how Logan Layman has grown even more as a vocalist, while her bass provides a firm foundation for the music here. Cole is an excellent guitarist and contributes an interesting guitar figure in his backing. Barbarji impresses with his open horn playing here and even more on “I’m Somebody” where his adept use of a mute lends his playing a harmonica-like flavor. Cole’s whining blues-rock slide guitar, the herky-jerky groove, and the simple lyric make this less appealing despite Logan’s singing, including a bit of scatting.

Djembe Hendrix adds djembe to the slow drag groove of “Make Me Yours” with Branarji and Logan standing out again. It is followed by Logan putting her heart into the slow blues “Ain’t Gonna Fake It No More,” with Barbarji’s growling trumpet solo standing out before engaging in a musical conversation with Cole’s heated fuzz-toned guitar. “Fever” opens with Logan’s bass and vocals with Davidson’s light drumming. Cole adds some nice echoey guitar in his backing while

muted trumpet from Barbarji adds to the atmosphere of a sultry and marvelous interpretation of this song which is perhaps this recording's high point.

I continue to be impressed by the quality of the performances from In Layman Terms....which stands out here. They perhaps still have to work on the craft of writing songs, but Logan is becoming quite an authoritative singer, Cole a forceful guitarist, and with the terrific trumpeter Hamed Barbarji, employ unusual instrumentation that has resulted in robust and intriguing music.

Ron Weinstock



ETTA JONES
FEATURING THE CEDAR WALTON TRIO
A Soulful Sunday: Live at the Left Bank
REEL TO REAL

One of two initial releases on this new label devoted to issuing important archival recordings, "A Soulful Sunday" presents a live recording by the wonderful singer Etta Jones at a February 1972 concert presented by Baltimore's Left Bank Jazz Society. On this occasion, she was backed by the great trio of Cedar Walton on piano, Sam Jones on bass and Billy Higgins on drums. Recordings from the Left Bank Jazz Society (LBJS) have been released before including on labels operated by the late Joel Dorn and Bob Sunenblick. However, Zev Feldman received a tip that a cache of LBJS tapes had been located that a former member had been storing in a closet.

After a rousing rendition by the Cedar Walton Trio of "Theme From Love Story," Vernon welsh introduces her noting that she flew in from Chicago where she was appearing with Gene Ammons, for this appearance and then she launches into "Sunday" with the trio swinging hard behind her. Catherine Russell, who was interviewed about Etta Jones for the booklet, observed that "She's true to the lyrics she's singing. I believe her. She's telling her own story through the lyrics." Listening to her from this performance I was finding a slight acidic aspect of her singing that reminded me of Esther Phillips while her phrasing suggested Billie Holiday. This aspect is also present on an imaginative interpretation of "This Guy's In Love With You."

Other delights here include the heartfelt rendition Tadd Dameron's classic ballad, "If You Could See Me

Now." Catherine Russell states that Etta reminds her of Dinah Washington. Etta takes "Blow Top Blues," one of Washington's big early hits, into her own as she delivers it at a slightly brisker tempo than Dinah's version with some spectacular playing by Walton. The performance closed with a superb interpretation of her most famous recording, "Don't Go To Strangers," where she evokes Holiday during part of the performance.

This recording captures a period when Etta Jones recorded very little, but beyond its historical value, this recording's music is exceptional. The accompanying booklet enhances the listening experience with the aforementioned interview with Catherine Russell, James Gavin's overview of Etta's career, John Fowler's recollections about the Left Bank Jazz Society, and Houston Person's memories of Etta Jones with whom Person worked and recorded with until Etta's passing in 2001. "A first-rate release

"A Soulful Sunday" makes for soulful jazz listening and is a first-rate historical release. *Ron Weinstock*



LINDSAY BEAVER
Tough As Love
ALLIGATOR RECORDS

Bruce Iglauer writes, in the liner notes to "Tough As Love," "I never expected to choose a female singing drummer from Halifax, Nova Scotia in easternmost Canada to be the newest member of the Alligator Records family. ... Lindsay delivers blues, R&B and old school rock 'n' roll in a voice brimming with attitude and soulfulness. She's described her music as "punk blues," but that's too narrow a term. She comes at every song with urgent intensity, soul-baring emotion, a distinct swagger and a take-no-prisoners confidence."

Beaver currently lives in Austin, Texas after spending time in Toronto where she went to music school to hone her skills on a drum kit and where she led a band, the 24th Street Wailers. With them, she recorded five albums and while performing caught the ear of Jimmy Vaughan who encouraged her to check out the Austin scene. After a few visits, she settled there in 2018, making new musical friends including her touring band of guitarist Brad Stivers and bassist Josh Williams. Musical influences include Billie Holiday, Nick Curran, The Ramones, Amy Winehouse, Sam Cooke,

and Earl Palmer (her only influence on drums). She has guests on this recording that include Marcia Ball, Laura Chavez, Matt Farrell, Sax Gordon, Dennis Gruenling, and Eve Monsees.

She produced this recording, her Alligator debut and first under her name. She wrote 7 of the 12 songs and handled the vocals and drums. One is impressed with the opening tough blues “You’re Evil,” with Dennis Gruenling’s harmonica adding to the energy of this performance and she scores a knockout with her husky, robust singing. She certainly can belt it out while Stivers blasts off on his guitar solo, if a bit frenetic. Her singing might be likened to Etta James with a rockabilly spirit, while she keeps a crisp shuffle groove throughout.

One of the highlights of this album is “Too Cold To Cry,” a Louisiana blues styled number evoking Earl King’s “Those Lonely, Lonely Nights,” with Marcia Ball on piano evoking Huey ‘Piano’ Smith, while Stivers channels Johnny ‘Guitar’ Watson. With Sax Gordon taking a blistering baritone sax solo, “What a Fool You’ve Been” sounds like vintage ‘50s West Coast rock’n’roll, while the rendition of Little Willie John’s “You Hurt Me,” is a terrific slow blues with Stivers channeling Ike Turner crossed with Otis Rush. Stivers shares the vocal on a tight original rock and roll performance with rollicking piano and a crisp guitar solo.

She does tone down her strong vocals on her

cover of Slim Harpo’s “Got Love If You Want It,” which is wonderfully played. Stivers is excellent here as is Gruenling, while Beaver’s crisp drumming is right on. “Oh Yeah” is another solid piece of rock and roll as she tells everybody to get wild, followed by another superb slow blues, Angela Strelhi’s “Lost Cause.” Another choice cover is a lesser known Art Neville song, “Let’s Rock,” with a fine vocal and strong backing including Matt Farrell’s piano.

“Mean To Me” is another bluesy piece of rock’n’roll, crisply played with Stivers and Laura Chavez both soloing and then trading fours. It is a spirited close to an excellent recording. Lindsay Beaver is an excellent singer who brings plenty of passion to her vocals. Her original songs possess the spirit of classic rock’n’roll and blues. She is also a solid drummer who, along with Josh Williams, anchors a superb rhythm section on these wonderfully played and paced performances. Putting all this together, it ends up as an exceptional release.

Ron Weinstock



JARED SIMS

**The New York Sessions
ROPEADOPE**

While his prior album, “Change of Address” focused on his baritone playing, Jared Sims’ new release presents him also on tenor sax as he focuses on what New York City meant to him when he lived there and performed regularly at clubs like The Knitting Factory, Wetland’s, and Brooklyn’s Tea Lounge. Now Director of Jazz Studies at West Virginia University, he leads a quartet of Chris McCarthy on piano, Alex Tremblay on bass and Evan Hyde on drums for what is simplistically described as a straight-ahead, hard-bop recording.

Sims opens with “Tribeca Tap Bar,” a swinging performance with a Brazilian tinge begins with Sims taking a relaxed, energetic solo followed by solos from McCarthy and Tremblay. The rhythm section gets an emphatic groove going on “Wetlands Preserved,” with Sims playing forcefully on a number that commemorates a now closed venue. “Brooklyn Tea” has a reflective quality as the pace cools with Sims playing authoritatively on baritone sax. From the title, “The Bodega,” one might expect a salsa groove, but the performance is a charming number on which Sims

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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

exhibits a lyrical and romantic quality.

In addition to Sims' robust saxophone, his rhythm section deserves applause in how they support and complement him along with thoughtful and well-constructed solos. These ingredients make for a memorable recording.

Ron Weinstock



PAUL OSCHER
Cool Cat
BLUES FIDELITY

In his liner notes to "Cool Cat," Paul Oscher notes his long friendship with the late James Cotton, including unexpectedly moving three doors down from him when Oscher moved to Austin from Los Angeles in 2012. After mainly doing out of town gigs, he tells how he started playing with his neck rack, guitar, and mic at a BBQ place, but after several months the property the place was on was sold to a developer. Then he started playing at another club, and after trying his solo gig, he started playing with a five-piece band that included Mike Keller on guitar, Corey Keller on drums, Sarah Brown on bass, and Tommy Robinson on sax. They are heard behind Oscher, except for Corey Keller, on this new release. Others heard include bassist Johnny Ace, drummer Russell Lee, guitarist Mike Schermer, Tomas Ramirez on tenor sax, Russell Lee and Lavelle White on vocals, Kid Andersen on bass and June Core on drums.

Oscher is mostly heard playing piano but also heard on guitar and harmonica in addition to his singing and contributed an intriguing set of originals except for a cover of "Rollin' and Tumblin'" credited to Muddy Waters. It is a well played mixed set of performances opening with a bit of New Orleans flavor, "Money Makin' Woman," where he displays his piano chops and ability as a singer. "Blues and Trouble" is a strong, slow blues that displays the influence of Otis Spann on his piano (and vocal) with Mike Schermer contributing solid guitar fills, while "Hide Out Baby," is a rocking shuffle with him playing guitar and neck rack harmonica with interplay between his guitar and that of Schermer and then a strong harmonica solo. "Work That Stuff" finds his harmonica in a Sonny Boy Williamson II mode with a spare, effective backing.

He does a monologue (some amusing storytelling) that is a prologue to the title track that leads into a jazz

quartet performance of the title track with saxophonist Ramirez standing out on a diverting performance. This group is also present for the brief "On the Edge," where Ramirez again stands out. Russell Lee recites Oscher's poem, "Mississippi Poem," before Lee's spoken vocal "Ain't That a Man," Oscher's tribute to James Cotton backed by Oscher's guitar and Keller's bass line. Lee also sings strongly on "Poor Man Blues." Miss Lavelle White is featured on 'Dirty Dealin' Mama,' set to a "Hootchie Kootchie Man" groove, authoritatively belting out the lyric.

A more extended, R&B rendition of the title track showcasing Robinson's gritty sax closes an entertaining recording by a very cool blues cat.

Ron Weinstock



THE 14 JAZZ ORCHESTRA
The Future Ain't What It Used To Be
DABON MUSIC

Don Bonsanti's 14 Jazz Orchestra follows up the band's previous recording, "Nothing Hard Is Ever Easy," about which I described as a "stimulating big band listening experience." This big band is comprised of some of South Florida's leading jazz and studio musicians and features Ed Calle. The 14 Jazz Orchestra has four reeds, three trumpets, two trombones, piano, guitar, bass, and drums with a number of special guests including Randy Brecker, Mark Egan, and Danny Gottlieb.

There is a nice mix of material, all arranged by Don Bonsanti opening with a lively rendition of Chick Corea's "Armando's Rhumba" with standout solos from Ed Maina on piccolo, Calle on soprano sax and pianist Jim Gasior. Mark Colby's tenor sax enlivens the performance of Buster Williams' "Firewater," along with trumpeter Cisco Dimas' bright playing and Dante Luciani's mellifluous trombone. The band gets into a nice relaxed groove here and like the entire album, never sounds frenzied or frantic. Chick Corea's "Blue Miles" is given a very bluesy treatment with choice piano from Gasior before some robust solos. Bonsanti re-orchestrated the late Bob Meyer's arrangement of Jobim's "Trieste," with lovely flute from Maina, flugelhorn by Ray Chicalo, and melodic tenor sax from guest Rick Margitza set against the lush scoring of the horns.

There is a delightful big band revival of Wayne

Shorter's "Dance Cadaverous" featuring some exceptional playing from trombonist Luciani. Eliane Elias' "Pandemonium" follows with a dynamic arrangement and stunning trumpet from Randy Brecker along with Gasior's crisp Latin jazz piano. A surprise selection is Merle Travis' "16 Tons," with a prancing groove, strong trumpet from Ray Chicalo and Peter Brewer's gutbucket baritone sax. Randy Brecker returns with imaginative, spirited trumpet on Jaco Pastorius' funky "Rice Pudding" that also stars guitarist Tom Lippincott's well-crafted blues-rock solo. While one of the album dedications is to former Pastorius collaborator Larry Warrilow, Bonsanti himself was a veteran of Pastorius' Word of Mouth Orchestra.

Bonsanti has provided lively, if not cutting edge, arrangements for an effervescent, contemporary big band recording with a nice selection of songs and strong musicianship.

Ron Weinstock



LADY A
Doin' Fine
SELF-PRODUCED

Seattle's Blues Diva, Lady A (Anita White), has a new soul-blues recording that should appeal to a broad spectrum of blues fans. Produced by guitarist and bassist Dexter Allen (of the Bobby Rush Band) and pianist Joey Robinson (who plays some drums here), this recording is mostly comprised of originals that evoke some of the classic Malaco and Elko Records by the likes of the late Denise LaSalle and Barbara Carr.

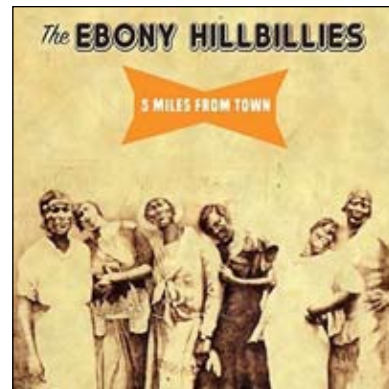
This is solidly played and she is a very solid vocalist who suggests LaSalle and who shines on the opening title track where she sings about waking up and being ready for the weekend, loving life and doing fine as Mississippi is like her second home as she sings about singing her heart out at B.B. King's. The band shines with tight backing with Allen providing a nifty repeated figure. It is followed by a walking tempo funky blues, "The Ride," with its hook line "Life is like a ride," but one must keep the faith in everything you do but the road can turn on you. An adaptation of Junior Parker's "Next Time You See Me" is presented as "Next Time U C Me" and credited to Lady A (it does appear she may have contributed some new lyrics), and is a nice shuffle performance with Allen taking a solid solo while

Richardson plays organ as well as piano.

"Tryin' To Get Over" is a soulful number with an outstanding vocal, where Allen's use of wah-wah along with the groove evokes some of Johnny 'Guitar' Watson's recordings. "That Man" is a tough soul-blues number that suggests classic Denise LaSalle with a bass line that evokes Johnny Taylor's hit, "Last two Dollars." "Throw Down" is a funky party blues as she instructs partying folks on the dance floor to throw hands in the air or clap in a soulful fashion.

Lady A distinguishes herself with her heartfelt vocals and the backing led by Allen and Richardson supports and enhances the first-rate soul-blues performances here.

Ron Weinstock



THE EBONY HILLBILLIES
5 Miles From Town
EH MUSIC

One of several African-American string bands to emerge over the past few years, The Ebony Hillbillies have gone from Manhattan street corners to the stages of Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center and made TV appearances on the BBC and ABC's Good Morning America. This colorful ensemble is comprised of Henrique Prince - violin and vocals; Norris Washington Bennett - banjo, mountain dulcimer, guitar and vocals; Gloria Thomas Gassaway - Bones (percussion) & vocals; William (Salty Bill) Salter - acoustic bass; Allannah Salter - shaker (percussion) & vocals; Newman Taylor Baker - washboard percussion; and A.R. (Ali Rahman) - (Cowboy) percussion. The best-known member of this group is William Salter who is co-writer of such legendary pop hits as "Where is the Love" and "Just the Two of Us."

The music on this CD varies from the lively opening fiddle tune "Hog Eyed Man," a lively skittle band cover of "Wang Dang Doodle," an old-timey styled "Darling Corey," and a heartfelt, intimate reworking of "I Can't Make You Love Me." "Carroll County Blues" is an instrumental blues with some outstanding violin from Prince with the percussion enlivening the performance. "Another Man Done Gone/Hands Up Don't Shoot" updates a traditional blues in light of contemporary police shootings of black men. Then there is "Fork in the Road," which comes off a string band adaptation

of a doo-wop styled ballad, and the old-time gospel of "Where He Leads Me (I Will Follow)."

The album closes with the spirited title track that evokes a square dance performance. It concludes a lively, engaging mix of pop, blues, folk, old-timey country, and jazz that has entertained the streets of Manhattan and concert halls around the world.

Ron Weinstock



ARENI AGBABIAN

Bloom
ECM

The delicate touch and minimalist character of pianist/vocalist Areni Agbabian's music compels the listener to lean intently towards it, rewarding the effort with engaging chemistry at a near-molecular level. The interaction of voice, piano and percussion present here makes for creative, economical "use" of an extremely compact space. Vying for attention with Ms. Agbabian's enchanting vocals is percussionist Nicolas Stocker's consistently focused brushwork.

Duane Verh



JORGE NILA

Tenor Time: Tribute to the Tenor Masters
NINJAZZ

Saxophonist Jorge Nila began playing music in Omaha, Nebraska in 1965 and moved to New York in 1978, studying with George Coleman, and working with Eddie Palmieri, Jack McDuff, Paul Simon and others. He returned to Omaha in 1990 where he is a music educator and performs in Colorado, Kansas City, and

the Midwest. On this recording, he is accompanied by guitarist Dave Stryker (who was also playing in the Omaha scene in the 1970s), drummer Dana Murray (also a long time friend whose home studio is where this was recorded), and organist Mitch Towne (who also has worked with Nila, and became one of the strongest B-3 players in the Midwest). They provide the backing for Nila's homage to a number of tenor players he has listened to.

While Lester Young is not represented here, Nila writes that he is the apple tree that has led to the fruit of the tenor players he salutes here. It opens up with a nicely paced version of Dexter Gordon's "Fried Bananas." We get introduced to Nila's warm, fluid playing along with Stryker's bright single note playing and Towne's straight-ahead organ grease all played at a relaxed, swinging groove that Murray puts down before trading fours with Nila on an exemplary performance. The blues-drenched funk of Hank Mobley's "Soul Station" follows.

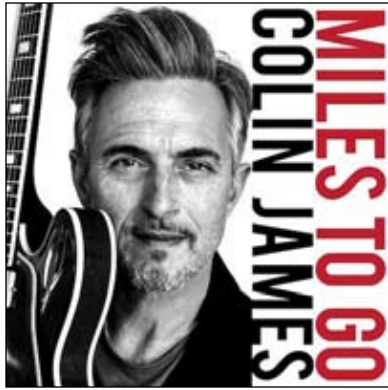
In honoring John Coltrane, Nila picked a Tadd Dameron composition, "On a Misty Night," and there is a strong tenor sax solo with his full tone and nicely developed solo, although he displays little Coltrane influence. It is followed by a beautiful rendition of Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes," with Towne adding an excellent solo. Stanley Turrentine is honored on a relaxed interpretation of Stevie Wonder's "Rocket Love," with Stryker adding a neat riff in his accompaniment. It contrasts with the strong drive of Joe Henderson's "Inner Urge." Sonny Rollins' "The Everywhere Calypso" allows for a bouncy, Caribbean flavor and a thoughtfully developed thematic solo that suggests Rollins' influence in how Nila solos with Stryker adding a solo here in the manner of Jim Hall with Rollins. Sonny Stitt's "The Eternal Triangle" takes us from bebop to hard bop with more thoughtful and inventive soloing.

Harold Vick's "Our Miss Brooks" is a relaxed, bluesy tenor-organ group shuffle with Towne outstanding, followed by Nila playing in a more gutbucket manner followed by Stryker's energetic solo with the band then slowly building the intensity of this gem that closes an excellent recording. Nila has picked some interesting tunes to honor a number of tenor giants and with the superb band, and shows himself to be a most formidable saxophonist.

Ron Weinstock

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COLIN JAMES

Miles To Go
STONY PLAIN

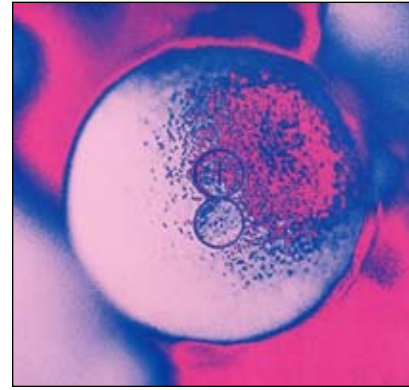
Nineteen albums into his storied career, Canadian bluesman Colin James revisits his roots with nine covers of tunes that inspired him as well as a couple of originals.

Even though the tunes pay homage to their roots, James isn't necessarily bound by them. Indeed, songs like Muddy Waters' "One More Mile" and Blind Willie Johnson's "Soul of a Man" get a makeover with an upbeat, horn-driven treatment on the former and an energetic gospel style reading of the later. (James reprises "One More Mile" in an acoustic version at the end of the disc which hews closer to the original). Geoff Muldaur's "Tears Came Rolling Down" is recast from its acoustic roots into a tough rocker.

Elsewhere, he captures the raw essence of the originals as on Muddy Waters' "Still a Fool," which features razor sharp guitar riffs and guttural vocals, Howlin' Wolf's "Ooh Baby Hold Me," which retains that tune's stuttering guitar riff, Big Arthur Crudup's "Dig Myself A Hole" featuring an ominous threat to the woman who dares to think she's leaving and Jessie Mae Robinson's oft-covered "Black Night," which wallows in its loneliness and deep sense of despair. His original "I Will Remain" has a silky smooth Boz Scaggs soul blues feel while his "40 Light Years" channels rocker Chris Isaak with its slick sheen and sinewy groove. James' confidence as a guitarist is revealed by his tasteful restraint on tunes like "I Need Your Love So Bad" where he could fill the space with dozens of notes but, instead, picks just a few well-placed ones to move the song along.

Overall, a fine disc that breathes new life into these relatively well-worn tunes.

Mark Smith



ONE O'CLOCK LAB BAND

Lab 2018: The Rhythm of the Road
NORTH TEXAS JAZZ

The celebrated One O'Clock Lab Band is the premier rehearsal big band at North Texas University, home of the oldest Jazz Education program, and this is their latest recording. The present director of the band, Alan Baylock suggests that this may be the best edition of the band, but perhaps the legendary Jimmy Heath might have put it best, "The One O'Clock Lab Band has produced many fine musicians over the years. I have performed with some of the graduates and this group is over the top." In any event, this band is obviously well-rehearsed and has players from the US, Canada, Columbia, Cuba, Japan and Taiwan that play with such spirit and conviction on a set of rousing barnburners and sophisticated, intricate ballads. Two of the nine numbers are composed by members of the band, two by members of the Jazz Faculty, and five compositions arranged by band members.

Drummer John Sturino arranged Victor Lewis for the brash, exciting performance that showcased the riveting tenor saxophone of Will Nathman and trumpet of Gregory Newman. Multi-instrumentalist Brandon Moore composed and arranged the title track with a driving, swinging groove and some very hot, tempestuous trombone by Brian Woodbury and surging alto sax from Kyle Bellaire along with an explosive drum solo. Moore also arranged Chris Potter's "Train" at a concert where Potter guested with the Band. This performance starts in a pensive manner and Moore takes a solo that thoughtfully builds in intensity followed by some saw-tooth guitar from Daniel Pinilla. Band vocalist Marion Powers is woven into the detailed, beguiling ensembles.

Brandon Moore also composed "Blues For Kazu," named for Kazunori Tanaka on trumpet who channels a whole range of trumpet history from Cootie Williams growlers, Sweets Edison's muted humor to Clark Terry and other modern blues trumpet masters on a marvelous blues performance that hints at the great Basie Bands of the fifties and sixties. Moore's scoring of the horns is most impressive. After Tanaka's high-note pyrotechnics and the driving rhythm (with Raul Reyes bass also showcased), the mood shifts for the rendition

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of Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower is a Lonesome Thing." Kyle Gordon's arrangement sumptuously frames Marion Powers' exquisite singing.

The album closes with Brandon Moore's thoughtful, unique and opulent arrangement of John Coltrane's "After the Rain," with Gregory Newman's most appealing flugelhorn and Brendon Wilkins' gorgeous flute set against this magnificent band. The other selections are also superbly played by a band that certainly shows on this latest release that it is not simply a great student big band, but the One O'Clock Lab Band is indeed a terrific big band.

Ron Weinstock



MIKE BOGLE TRIO

Dr. B!
MBP / GROOVE!

The Dr. B in this CD's title refers to Mike Bogle having a Doctorate in Musical Arts. A music educator as well as a marvelous keyboard player (here on the organ) composer and arranger, he is joined by guitarist Richard McClure and drummer Ivan Torres for a straight-ahead organ trio recording of mostly standards.

From the sprinter's tempo of the opening interpretation of "Cherokee," to the closing storytelling on "Walkin'," the Bogle Trio impresses with the crisp ensemble sound and their interplay. On the opening track all three solo and display their technical and musical command, with guitarist McClure's bright, single note solos being very appealing. McClure takes the lead on John Abercrombie's Ralph's Piano Waltz," while Bogle provides a harmonic base before his own pipe organ emulating solo while Torres puts down a crisp groove. There is a nice bluesy mashup of Neil Hefti's "Splanky" with Bobby Troup's "Route 66," that also includes some personable scatting and passable singing to go with the greasy organ-guitar here.

There is a relaxed, swinging take on "On The Street Where You Live," followed by the closing talking blues, "Walkin'," with his engaging story-telling. McClure's chicken picking guitar provides color to the vocal along with Bogle's repeated stepping riff pattern. Although this is a somewhat brief CD (34 minutes or so), it is a wonderfully played organ jazz trio. Ron Weinstock

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TONY BENNETT & DIANE KRALL

Love Is Here To Stay

VERVE RECORDS/COLUMBIA RECORDS

While Diane Krall recorded duets with Tony Bennett (who just turned 92) for Bennett's duets recordings, this celebration of the music of Tony Bennett is their first full album together. It also is a celebration of the George Gershwin songbook and issued on the 120th Anniversary of Gershwin's birth. The 14 performances were recorded with The Bill Charlap Trio (Bill Charlap on piano, Peter Washington on bass and Kenny Washington on drums).

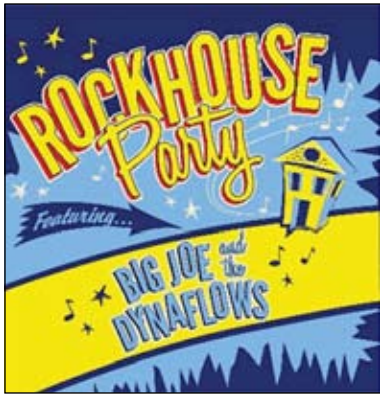
While Tony Bennett's voice perhaps is a tad frayed and not quite as supple as it once was, he remains a master song stylist. On the opening "S'Wonderful," Krall's sultry singing and the rapport between two produces a delightful recording. Furthermore, Bennett still retains so much of his voice as heard on a superb "Nice Work If You Can Get It," as well as the trading of lyrics on "Love Is Here To Stay." In addition to the charm of the two, the Charlap trio's backing is sublime as on "I Got Rhythm." Bennett's phrasing certainly adds weight to his vocal on "I've Got a Crush On You," while Krall responds with congenial warmth. "Fascinating Rhythm," which was the first song Bennett recorded decades ago, is effervescently performed.

There are some solo selections, including Krall's superb reading of "How Long Has This Been Going On," with Kenny Washington's use of brushes and Charlap's wonderful accompaniment. I believe this is a bonus selection for CDs purchased from Target stores, as is Bennett's vocal on "Oh, Lady Be Good." As indicated, the rapport between them is evident throughout the performances on this captivating recording.

Ron Weinstock

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BIG JOE AND THE DYNAFLOWS

Rockhouse Party
SEVERN RECORDS

“Rockhouse Party” is a surprise recording by Big Joe Maher. It has been several years since the DMV drummer, jump blues singer and bandleader has had a new recording. His last album “You Can’t Keep a Big Man Down,” was issued in 2011. Recorded in Franklin Tennessee, Maher is reunited with Kevin McKendree, the original DynafloWS keyboard player. He and McKendree co-produced this, and others heard here are young prodigy Yates McKendree on guitar, Robert Frahm on guitar, and Tom “Mookie” Brill on bass and vocals. On one track another guitar prodigy, Erin Coburn guests. Engineering the music is Evan Sarli, son of the late Jeff Sarli, who was the original bassist with the DynafloWS.

There is a nice mix of material that might be labeled urban blues as much as jump blues starting with a rendition of “Driving Wheel.” While patterned after the Junior Parker recording, this is no copy and Maher delivers a relaxed heartfelt vocal strongly backed with the organ helping lay down a musical foundation, and there are terrific guitar solos displaying the contrasting attacks of Yates and Frahm. Brill has not previously been featured as a vocalist. I recall him doing a solid Howlin’ Wolf styled vocal, but was not prepared for his soulful singing on Little Milton’s “So Mean To Me,” and O.V. Wight’s “8 Men 4 Women,” again with some strong backing.

Maher has always had an affinity for Smiley Lewis recordings and does a credible rendition of “Go On Fool” while laying down a solid second-line groove while Kevin McKendree plays driving boogie-woogie inflected piano. It is followed by an excellent Maher original “World Gone Wrong,” with atmospheric accompaniment, and well-considered solos, to go with the topical lyrics. Brill sings a rollicking shuffle interpretation of an old Nappy Brown recording, “If You Need Some Lovin’,” on which Maher and Erin Coburn provide backing vocals. There is a cover by Brill of Fenton Robinson’s “Tennessee Woman” that has a rockabilly flavor but comes off as a bit frantic. His other vocal is a solid rendition of Mack Self’s 1958 Sun rockabilly recording, “Vibrate.”

Maher’s “Go With The Flow” is a strong original jump blues celebrating his new DynafloWS automobile, followed by another original “I’m a Country Boy,” that sounds like it came from a Snooks Eaglin session for Imperial with Erin Coburn adding her solid fretwork. Two instrumentals, “Overdrive” and “Sleepy Joe” showcase the two guitarists. The two wrote the latter number with its ingratiating lazy groove. Percy Mayfield’s “Two Years of Torture” closes this album with a superb ‘three o’clock in the morning’ flavored performance.

There are no surprises here for those familiar with Joe Maher on an excellent recording full of fine vocals, marvelous playing and a nice variety of blues songs

Release date is February 15. *Ron Weinstock*



CANNONBALL ADDERLEY

Swingin’ In Seattle, Live At
The Penthouse 1966-67
REEL TO REAL RECORDINGS

This is one of two initial recordings on Real To Real which was launched in early 2017 by jazz impresario (and musician) Cory Weeds and renowned producer Zev Feldman. The label will be focused on important archival jazz releases. Feldman may be known as co-president of Resonance Records, and these releases may be ones that Resonance has passed on. If so, it isn’t because of the quality of the performances.

The music here comes from radio broadcasts over four nights at the Seattle club where Cannonball and his alto sax lead a quartet with brother and cornetist Nat Adderley, pianist Joe Zawinul, bassist Victor Gaskin and drummer Roy McCurdy, the same band heard on the classic Capitol album, “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy! Live at ‘The Club.’” It includes some radio intros from Seattle radio DJ and the original engineer of the Penthouse, Jim Wilke along with Cannonball’s spoken comments and some exceptional music.

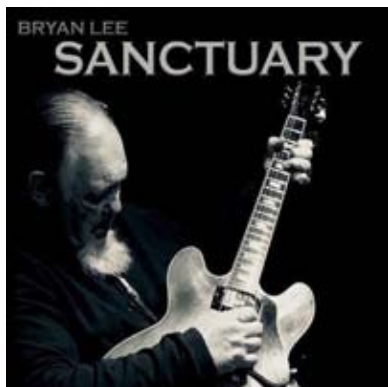
It is a fabulous CD of music by this terrific band starting with the explosive opening tune, Jimmy Heath’s “Big ‘P,’” taken at a breakneck tempo with scorching solos from the brothers. What is refreshing is that the songs selected here are not the familiar Adderley classics like “Work Song,” “Mercy Mercy, Mercy!,” “Jive Samba,” “This Here,” or “Unity 7.”

Instead, there is a marvelous swinging performance of “The Girl Next Door,” with spirited muted cornet, earthy alto sax and rhapsodic piano that transforms this into a relaxed waltz. “Sticks” and “Hippodelphia,” were both on “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy!” but heard here in lengthy, fiery gutsy performances.

Among the earliest to embrace bossa nova, Cannonball’s rendition of “The Morning Of The Carnival (Manhã de Carnaval)” by Luiz Bonfá and Antônio Maria is an energetic one in contrast to Stan Getz’s lighter attack. Other pleasures heard include the somewhat understated interpretation of Leonard Bernstein’s “Somewhere,” Zawinul’s mesmerizing “74 Miles Away,” and the dazzling bebop of Charlie Parker’s “Back Home Blues,” on which brother Nat sits out.

While the chief attraction is the music, this comes with a booklet with rare photos by Lee Tanner, Tom Copi, and others. Music journalist Bill Kopp contributes an essay placing Cannonball’s music in historical context including discussing the songs included. An interview with Jim Wilke by Seattle-based saxophonist and jazz writer Steve Griggs delves into what the scene was like at the Penthouse in the 1960s and Cannonball’s relationship to the club over the years. There are also interviews with Cannonball’s widow and head of the Julian Adderley estate, Olga Adderley Chandler, and acclaimed saxophonist Vincent Herring. It is an excellent booklet to go with the superb music on a fabulous release.

This recording was issued on vinyl on Record Store Day’s Black Friday Event (on 11/23/18), and the CD will be released on January 18. **Ron Weinstock**



BRYAN LEE

Sanctuary

EARRELEVANT RECORDS

Some of my most memorable experiences listening to blues live (as well as listening to blues recordings) came from Bryan Lee. This is his latest CD with a variety of backing musicians including Jimmy Voegeli on keyboards, Jack Berry on bass and Matt Liban on drums.

Lee calls this a blues-gospel recording and that might impact one’s reaction to this. I do not take away from Lee’s convictions, but some might find too much

preaching here, although Lee sings strongly and plays wonderfully. The band is excellent as well but even on a solid shuffle like “The Gift” where he recites his musical influences he says Jesus straightened him out and now Bryan knows what to do. Then he sings that “Jesus Gave Me the Blues,” that is followed by a rendition of the late Cootie Stark’s “U-Haul,” with its lyric that we don’t owe anything since we can’t take it when we pass on. Lee does a fervent new recording of one of his older blues, “Don’t Take My Blindness For Weakness,” where he sings I’m as good as you, and anytime one makes one, Bryan has to make two. There is also a nice arrangement of “The Lord’s Prayer,” that Lee sings his heart out on.

As stated, “Sanctuary” is musically a solid Bryan Lee performance, but again some may be turned off by the religious content. **Ron Weinstock**



KURT ELLING

The Questions

OKEH RECORDS/SONY MUSIC MASTERWORKS

This new album by Kurt Elling is another collaboration with Bradford Marsalis as producer. Elling is backed here by John McLean on guitars, Stu Mindeman on keyboards, Clark Sommers on bass, and Jeff “Tain” Watts on drums. Joey Calderazzo plays piano on three selections, Branford Marsalis guests on saxophone and Marquis Hill guests on trumpet and flugelhorn.

“The Questions” is intended to bring a rich and irresistible musical conversation, encouraging listeners to join Elling in living with big questions and finding the courage to face our fears in these increasingly difficult and uncertain times. It is a rich grouping of songs ranging from Bob Dylan and Paul Simon, setting forth the poet Rumi’s words to a Jaco Pastorius instrumental, Broadway classics and more.

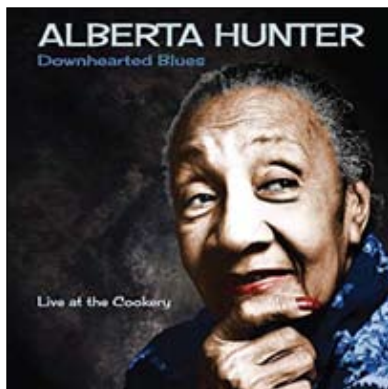
Elling brings new meaning to Bob Dylan’s “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall.” He begins acapella before the band joins in as Watts engages in a dialogue with him and Marsalis’ soprano sax twists around his vocal. Stu Mindeman’s musical setting for Franz Wright’s poem “A Happy Thought,” on which Mindeman has a lovely solo. Along with the compelling performance of the Dylan song, Elling’s rendition of Simon’s “An American Tune” is similarly stunning with Hill and Marsalis add-

ing color. Elling's restrained beginning contributes to a rendition of Peter Gabriel's "Washing of the Water" as his vocal builds in intensity as Mindeman subtly accompanies him.

Calderazzo's piano and Watts' deft rhythmic accents provide the foundation for Elling on "Lonely Town" from the musical "On The Town," with Hill's flugelhorn adding to the charm here. Calderazzo also contributed the music for, and played on, "The Enchantress," to which Elling adapted parts of a Wallace Stevens poem.

Marsalis' marvelous, tuneful soprano sax enhances Elling's wonderful singing on Rodgers and Hammerstein's "I Have Dreamed." Guitarist McLean arranged this as well the Hoagy Carmichael-Johnny Mercer standard "Skylark" as Elling brings a gentle warmth to the wistful lyric. This latter number closes an exquisitely performed and highly original, jazz vocal recording.

Ron Weinstock



ALBERTA HUNTER

Downhearted Blues: Live at the Cookery ROCKBEAT

This recording brings back memories of a couple of evenings this writer had in the late 1970s when the legendary Miss Hunter was a regular feature at Barney Josephson's "The Cookery" in Greenwich Village with pianist Gerald Cook and bassist Jimmy Lewis. Alberta Hunter was, of course, one of the legendary so-called 'classic' blues singers, but her career extended decades. She is famous for writing "Downhearted Blues," that is most famous from Bessie Smith's famous recording (and as she tells the audience, she was still collecting royalties from when this performance was recorded in 1980).

Hunter also recorded at a famous recording session with Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet in the twenties and continued to perform until the 1960s. She started working as a nurse in 1957 until she was forced to retire by hospital regulations in 1974. She was bored until Josephson invited her to a six-week engagement at The Cookery and her star was ignited once again, recording four albums, writing songs for a Robert Altman film and delighting audiences.

The performances here were featured in the docu-

mentary "Alberta Hunter: My Castle's Rockin'," and what a marvelous set of music we have starting with her exuberant, sassy opener "My castle's Rockin'," with her getting the audience to clap along with her. It is a wonderful program including her rendition of "Downhearted Blues," "The Love I Have For You" which she wrote for a Robert Altman film, a marvelous "I Got Rhythm," the bawdy "Two-Fisted Double-Jointed Rough and Ready Man," "The Dark Town Strutter's Ball," a strong rendition of "I Got a Mind To Ramble," "When You're Smiling," "Georgia on My Mind," and "Handy Man." Supported by Cook's marvelous accompaniment, she displays plenty of feisty sassiness and also tenderness. More important, she swings hard and leads her accompanists in this manner. I imagine her striking her fist into the palm of the other hand as she got The Cookery audience rocking with her on so many nights.

Ron Weinstock



CHARLIE HADEN & BRAD MEHLDAU

Long Ago and Far Away IMPULSE! RECORDS

This is another posthumous recording by the late Charlie Haden. It derives from a November 2007 performance with pianist Brad Mehldau at the Christuskirche church in Mannheim, Germany. Haden met Mehldau in 1993. He found a way to bring Mehldau out to LA to perform with himself and Lee Konitz at the Jazz Bakery in 1996, which led to a trio recording on Blue Note (1997) called "Alone Together." In 2011, Haden, Mehldau, Lee Konitz, and Paul Motian recorded a live album for ECM called "Live at Birdland." Haden listened to the tape of this performance often and had wanted to release it at some point.

From the opening moments of the interpretation of Charlie Parker's "Au Private" to the closing moments of "Everything Happens To Me," the performances display a delicate quality. Mehldau thoughtfully develops his solos with thoughtfulness and restraint complemented by Haden's bass as they break down the underlying motifs and build their solos out of these components in these fascinating musical conversations. "My Old Flame" opens with Mehldau conveying a wistful mood with his spare, precise playing. "Long Ago and Far Away" has a slightly lighter feel to it, although again

played with considerable restraint.

Listening to the six songs is like listening to a quiet conversation between good friends. There is an intimate feel to go with the intricate and thoughtful music Haden and Mehldau provide on a record of considerable charm.

Ron Weinstock



EDEN BRENT

An Eden Brent Christmas With Bob Dovell
YELLOW DOG RECORDS

I have found Eden Brent to be an artist who transcended the blues and boogie-woogie label often used in describing her and her music. This delightful album of Christmas and Holiday standards by her is further evidence of this. Produced by her husband, trombonist Dovell, the songs will be familiar ones. Dovell has provided musical arrangements in mostly a swinging little big band mode.

Besides Dovell's trombone (and vocal on "Baby It's Cold Outside"), others here include Mark Franklin trumpet, Art Edmaiston on tenor sax, Kirk Smothers on Baritone sax, Tim Goodwin on bass, and John Bass on guitar. While Eden Brent sings on all the songs, she plays piano on four with Alvie Givhan playing on the other eight while the drum chair is split between Earl Lowe and James Sexton.

Eden Brent's singing is quite impressive as she most capably delivers these sophisticated, jazzy vocals with some marvelous backing starting with the ebullient, swinging rendition of "Boogie Woogie Santa Claus" (with her sparkling boogie-woogie piano and a booting baritone sax solo) and ending with a warm, relaxed interpretation of Mel Torme's wonderful "The Christmas Song."

A reflective "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" is followed by her cover of Charles Brown's classic recording, "Merry Christmas Baby." Dovell contributes a New Orleans groove for "Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town," and a moving trombone solo behind her rendition of "That's What I Want For Christmas" that she heard on a Nancy Wilson recording. Then there is a playful vocal duet with Dovell on "Baby It's Cold Outside."

In her brief liner notes, she notes that she and Bob Dovell celebrate their 3rd wedding anniversary and

11th Christmas together "with our takes on twelve well-loved classics. We hope they make you smile." They definitely brought a smile to this listener.

Ron Weinstock

If you don't play Christmas songs out of the season, by all means keep this gem in mind for later this year...Ed.



BLUE & LONESOME DUO

Pacing the Floor
ELLERSOUL RECORDS

The Blue & Lonesome Duo is comprised of Richmond's Li'l Ronnie on vocals, harmonica and foot drum and Gordon Harrower on vocals and guitar for an unassuming set of informal, stripped down blues performances that perhaps break new ground, but provides some very enjoyable listening. There is a mix of covers and some originals starting with a nice rendition of John Estes "Drop Down Mama" (wrongly credited to Honeyboy Edwards) with a nice vocal by Harrower with Owens providing some dynamic harp. It is followed by a traditionally based original, "Wine Headed Woman," with Owens singing through his harp mike (like Papa Lightfoot) with Harrower's providing a strong bass line to anchor the performance.

"Mean Red Spider" is a nice take on a Robert Lockwood song that Muddy Waters covered and Harrower's attractive vocal is more in the vein of Lockwood, and followed by a rollicking rendition of Jimmy Rogers' "Act Like You Love Me," with Owens playing superbly in the manner of the legendary Big Walter Horton. Another notable track is "Careless Love," with a heartfelt vocal and more fine harp from Owens. The title track is an original, easy rocking blues boogie with Owens upfront and Harrower providing simple, effective backing. There is even a blues duo cover of James Brown's lament "Try Me," along with nicely rendered covers of Jimmy Rogers' "Out on the Road" and Slim Harpo's recording of "Raining in My Heart." On the latter recording the two capture the feeling of Harpo's swamp blues Excello original.

While one would be hard-pressed to call this an essential recording, there is plenty to enjoy on this highly diverting recording.

Ron Weinstock

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