

SJMI

May 2020





The cover features a stylized illustration of two orange figures against a light beige background. On the left, a figure stands holding a microphone on a stand. On the right, a figure is seated playing a teal trumpet. The title 'BRIGATON JAZZ SAFARI' is written in large, bold, black letters, with the 'J' and 'S' being particularly large and stylized. At the bottom, there is a line-art illustration of a city skyline.

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4 Lockdown Diaries:
Sara Oschlag

20 Words... Agnes Keplinger

7 Jazz Essentials

22 Live Stream Reviews

8 Interview:
Sarathy Korwar

26 Album Q&A
+ Review

12 Interview:
Ela Southgate

38 Album Reviews

15 Lockdown Diaries:
Jennifer Left

48 Live
Stream
Listings

18 Big Band Scene

50 Pete
Recommends...

Click on the blue SJM logo at
the bottom of the page to
return to the contents page.

Cover: Jennifer Left & Jack Tavaré
at The Hand in Hand by Lisa
Wormsley
Above: Sara Oschlag by Lisa
Wormsley

Lockdown Diaries

Sara Oschlag

I'm sat here in the sunshine, the odd cloud passing by overhead, wondering what to say about my experience of the quarantine. I don't want to dwell on the financial stresses but rather focus on the positive. Mostly. Let's have a go then....

We self-quarantined a few days before it was made mandatory by the Spanish government. We cancelled two gigs, having to explain why. Then a warning was released, giving everyone in our village a few days to socialise, and drink the bars dry, a temptation which we resisted.

Before COVID-19 became a European problem, I was preparing to go back to Brighton and hit the gigging season hard. A prospect I was looking forward to but there was also a simmer of stress bubbling away. The pressure we put on ourselves to be busy, organise ourselves and run our businesses well, can be too much at times.

So with that in mind, I'm quite enjoying my time under quarantine. I generally fill my days with a few routines, which include cuddling our cat Peanut, making the bed and opening the windows, yoga or other exercise and a lot of stretching, working on my recording project (I'll explain more about that shortly), eating really nice meals thanks to Dan, keeping up with friends and family on video calls, doing various DIY projects around the house, co-

caring for two black kittens I rescued 3 months ago, while they wait to be allowed to travel to the UK to their forever home, doing Wim Hoff (The Iceman) breathing technique, trying to make Peanut be friends with a street cat we've named Twiglet and having the odd clandestine wine meeting outside our door with a couple of friends - at a safe distance, of course.

So pretty busy, really. I've hardly even got time for procrastinating, but I make damn sure to fit it in.



So! The recording project is entirely based on our separation from friends and colleagues. I find it so interesting how similar our situation is across the globe and it made me want to defy our geographical restrictions by connecting with



musicians from all over, so I decided to create an EP. The EP quickly grew in to a full album, with so many wonderful musicians and friends around the world that I wanted to include. It's going to be a digital release only (cheap!) and anything earned from the record will go to charity. I've mentioned NHS Charity Trust Fund on Facebook but I'm also aware of a big increase in domestic violence during the quarantine.

I definitely don't feel right about asking for money for my own gain at the moment. It's my belief that our governments should look after us, not our friends or anyone else, as we're all in the same financial boat. Some even have holes in the hull.

The only moment I've had where being stuck really hit me was the other day, when my mum fell over and broke her arm. She was hospitalised and had an operation that involved having a metal plate and eight screws put into her arm, just above the elbow. My mum is nearly 80 years old. I wanted so badly to be there for her and I was so worried about the operation that I burst into tears of relief when I spoke to her post op - fortunately she was doing well, all things considered.

My mum normally lives in

Copenhagen but since the virus outbreak, she's been staying with my dad in the countryside, which is the one thing that has kept me calm. She wasn't allowed visitors, of course, but after 4 days in hospital, my dad could pick her up in his car, be there for her and take care of her 24/7. In fact, we had a video call yesterday and my dad kept putting filters on, dressing my mum in wigs & glasses, with her dictating which ones she liked or telling him off for the ones she disliked. All back to normal then.



I have deliberately put myself in a happy bubble. I've not followed death tolls or stories of peoples' demise following the COVID-19 outbreak but instead focussed on staying in touch with as many friends as possible, making sure they know I'm here for them. I strive to keep finding new ways to be inspired, by reading, listening to music and podcasts, doing various wellness classes and courses and being



outside, either on the terrace or walking to the supermarket - a 3 and a bit mile round trip up and down a mountain. I try to be kind to myself, which isn't a strictly quarantine-based occupation, but I have the time to delve into the issue and really face the consequences of my thinking - the impact it has on me and the people in my life. If I'm unkind to myself, I can easily shift the unkindness on to other people: the



person in front of me in the queue, a person posting something on Facebook, my own family and so on. I feel I'm making progress and I'm

experiencing being in charge of my mood and thoughts, by attempting to accept whatever thought or mood hits me, counter-act with a kind thought or by paying gratitude to something or someone in my life. Sometimes just by laughing at myself and telling me to shut the fuck up.



I'm gonna finish off, sounding like a right cliché and say that I hope we all learn something from this experience. I hope we manage to keep caring about the people around us, the way we have in these times, under COVID-19 restrictions. That we look at the climate improvements that have happened in our absence - from our travel restrictions and lowered consumerism - and hold ourselves accountable for how we treat the planet on a daily basis. That we take responsibility and cut down on our luxurious behaviours. I hope that we truly realise how privileged we are in western society and I hope we put all those learnt experiences into actions. For example next time we vote...

Ok, I think I've taken enough of your time now.

Take care of yourselves and each other.

Vocalist Sara Oschlag performs around the world and lives in Brighton and Spain.

All photos by Sara Oschlag.

Jazz Essentials

Miles Davis
In A Silent Way
(Columbia)

Well, Miles had to feature in this column soon enough, but while this month's essential Miles might not be an immediately obvious choice, it is crucial to so much of modern music.

Miles Davis changed the sound of jazz three times in his career, always at the end of a decade. In 1948–50 he and others gave Birth to the Cool, in 1959 he recorded *Kind Of Blue* and popularised modal jazz, and in 1969 saw *In A Silent Way*, which ushered in jazz rock. Three revolutions and, oddly, each one initially quiet, as if Miles was somewhat unsure about each new style and was gently trying it out.

The 1969 revolution that was *In A Silent Way* began the previous year. *Miles In the Sky* introduced rock beats, while the entire second side of *Filles de Kilimanjaro* used electric instruments. So Miles was already wired when he recorded this new album on 18 February 1969. From his existing band, Wayne Shorter stuck to soprano sax, Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock doubled up on electric pianos, Dave Holland remained on electric bass, Tony Williams played drums. Austrian keyboardist Joe Zawinul sat in on organ, while, crucially, British guitarist John McLaughlin debuted on electric guitar.

The album features just two extended tracks: *Shhh/Peaceful* and *In A Silent Way/It's About Time*. They originally lasted around two hours in total and were then cut down and substantially rearranged in the editing room by Teo Macero, Miles' long-time producer. The music is one long modal groove, hypnotic, mesmeric in its



brooding intensity. Tony Williams' insistent pulse provides the base on which the whole shimmering edifice stands, McLaughlin the ethereal questing, melodic lines, while Wayne Shorter's spine-chilling appearance on *Shhh/Peaceful* at 9:13 minutes is one of the most enigmatic entrances in all of jazz. Nothing like it had ever been heard before.

In A Silent Way has an interesting afterlife. It led Miles directly to the paranoia of *Bitches Brew* and the street funk of *On The Corner*, McLaughlin to the sonic overload of the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Hancock to the sheer fun of Head Hunters. Jazz rock was silent no longer. But in late May 1974 Miles learned of the death of his idol, Duke Ellington, and recorded an elegy – *He Loves Him Madly* – that could have come straight off that 1969 session. Among those hugely impressed was Brian Eno, informing what he later termed ambient music, an all-important genre that now incorporates the Fourth World music of trumpeter Jon Hassell as well as the come-down music of Aphex Twin and Squarepusher. *In A Silent Way* lives on.

Simon Adams

Sarathy Korwar

Interviewed by Charlie Anderson

Drummer, tabla player and composer Sarathy Korwar was set to be part of the jazz contingent at the now cancelled Great Escape Festival in May. Sarathy spoke to me over the phone from his home in Kilburn, North West London, where he's spending his time in lockdown.

How are you feeling with everything at the moment?

"Good days and bad, like most people I think. Fortunately, my family are doing fine. I try to stick to a schedule of sorts. In a way, it's a great time for me to sit down and practice and write music but equally it's not the most creative of periods, you know. So I'm battling those things. There are times when I'm really lucky and happy to be not doing much and have time to create, but also sometimes the anxiety takes over."

Sarathy was born in the US but grew up in Ahmedabad and Chennai in India in the 1990s. After moving to Pune as a teenager he studied the tabla with Rajeev Devasthali.

When you were learning and growing as a musician, were there any key moments that really opened your eyes?

"There are a couple of moments. They're both when I was introduced to mentors, the people who pointed me in the direction of the music that I eventually started playing. The first one was when I was about 13. A teacher in school realised that I might be interested in the kind of music that he was interested in. He started showing me music like Ahmad Jamal, Oscar Peterson and Coltrane. I had no idea who these people were at the time and he started giving me cassette tapes. I was just in awe that

somebody had taken me out of the crowd and decided that I was someone that they could give attention to. So I really enthusiastically started listening to all this music, partly because I was interested in seeing what it was, but also because this guy had given me a lot of attention, so I felt very validated. That's how my love for a lot of this jazz came about, listening to those early tapes and then discovering more people for myself. People like Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Alice Coltrane and further through the canon of work. That was one thing that shifted things for me." "The second one was meeting my tabla teacher when I moved to Pune when I was about 18. At that point in my career I'd already been playing tabla for 10 years. I could already play but meeting him really opened my mind up to thinking about rhythm in a completely different sort of way and opened up this kind of perspective on time and rhythm that has, to this day, really helped me approach music in a way that I find very accessible and inspiring."

Was there a moment when you felt it was easier to express your own identity?

"I don't know if there was ever a moment but over a period of time, until the age of about 24 or 25, I wasn't really interested in expressing myself, in the sense of I wasn't looking very actively to find my own voice as much as I was just learning these styles of music that I was deeply interested in learning: jazz and Indian classical music. So I wanted to get really good at both those styles of music. Then, very naturally, I started developing my own ability and creativity, and trying to find my own voice. Over the

Photo: Fabrice Bourgelle

course of being 24 to about 26, I was doing my masters at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London and I was given the time and space and encouragement to really do my own thing. So that really pushed me towards developing my own voice. That's where it began for me in some sense, and then onwards really."

Sarathy released his debut album, *Day to Day*, in 2016 which was recorded with support from the Steve Reid Foundation. The success of this album was followed by the recording of a live album at Church of Sound, entitled *My East Is Your West* with UPAJ Collective, a group of jazz and Indian classical musicians.

You were quite involved with Total Refreshment Centre in Dalston. Do you still have a connection to it?

"In a sense, the golden age is over. It was really in its peak in 2017-19 when there was something happening every night, and the weekends especially. In the daytime there were all these people there in the main room. It was such an amazing place to just be there. I would just go because there'd always be people there, just hanging out, making music together and chatting. It really was a community-led space, but also pivotal for the London jazz movement because so many of their gigs were being programmed at TRC. There would always be something on and you trust their curation to know that something will be really good. It became a real hub. Unfortunately, the space is closed down as a performance venue now, so it's lost a lot of its edge, I feel. It's still a wonderful place and there's lovely people there. I miss it from what it was, two years ago."

Tell us your feelings about how Indian musicians have been represented in 'spiritual jazz' in the past.

"I think it's a very sensitive topic because a lot of jazzers get very angry at me for saying this stuff. But the thing is, one must remember that I love this music as well. I love Alice Coltrane, Don Cherry and Pharaoh Sanders and all these people, the spiritual jazz guys. But I always did find the music problematic and unsettling as well, primarily because of their use of Indian instruments and Indian sounds in their own music. Whether it's a product of their time or not, the fact is that you hear some badly played tabla or an out-of-tune sitar on some of these recordings and that was the only access to Indian music that a lot of people had back in the day. So if you then think that Indian music is just badly played sitar on a Joe Henderson record, for example, then that would be what you think Indian music is. That's always been my issue with it. If you're going to represent something, then represent it well. With the whole kind of revival of spiritual jazz in maybe the last decade, it was something that no one was talking about. None of my peers, none of the people in the industry. I brought this up and then thought, well, if no one else is feeling it and I'm feeling it then I should really at least talk about it, out in the open. That's really all it was. Our idea to play those songs, in my mind, was to say 'look, this is what the fusion of styles is going to sound like in 2020 or whenever'. This is what it should sound like and also equal parts of five Indian classical musicians and five jazz musicians, so that it's not seen as tokenistic in any way, and it's



Photo: Dan Medhurst

a real meeting of genres. That's what the whole UPAJ Collective is all about. It's about balancing those scales."

Tell us about your new EP, *Otherland*

"It was supposed to be out on Record Store Day but it will be out in June now, because Record Store Day has been postponed. It's basically an extension of the album that I put out last year, *More Arriving*, with songs which I'd finished around the same period and had intended to put out on that record. There are two original songs and two remixes by Auntie Flow and Nick Woodmansey (aka Emanative), another Sussex native. I'm really excited about it. It's supposed to lead up to our gig at the Village Underground in May, but obviously that's not happening. So

plans are all over the place but I'm still excited about the music that's going to come out in June."

Do you have any future plans, for when things improve?

"I have. We're going to see how it plays out, but I think a lot of the gigs we were supposed to do on our tour in May, hopefully will happen later in the year. September or October is when we're now hoping to do those gigs, but we'll see. I'm just spending this time working on a new album. I'm trying to take it positively and spend two months in the studio and just write, write, write. That's pretty much it."

<https://www.sarathykorwar.com>

Ela Southgate



Photo: Lisa Wormsley

Vocalist Ela Southgate spoke to Jim Burlong ahead of her concert 'Ela With Strings' at the [now postponed] Brighton Fringe Festival.

How did you get into music to start with?

My family was very musical, my mum was a teacher but could have pursued dancing as a career. She dabbled in playing double bass when I was young and my Dad was a professional jazz pianist, so I grew up listening to him play at home and out on local gigs in North London. I first came to Brighton to study a degree course in both fine art and music. After that I worked doing graphic design for a few years and it just so happened that the guitarist John Harris was my boss there. He did a weekly trio gig with Jeff Howlett and Keith Baxter in Mrs Fitzherberts pub. They were most encouraging and I often sat in, later

becoming a regular fixture with them. I then became more focused on jazz and enrolled to study piano at the Chichester jazz course in 2003 when it was run by Adrian Kendon. It was a fantastic start on the road to becoming a more rounded musician. It's one of 'the beauties of jazz' that there's always more to learn. I gave up the day job and have been a full-time musician for around ten years now.

Which other vocalists have you most been influenced by?

There are so many that I love and have taken influence from, but at the top I would say are Chet Baker, Ella Fitzgerald and João Gilberto. I particularly love the tone along with the relaxed delivery of João. I like

to listen to how these and other greats phrase the original melody, then change and play with it, and of course how they scat. I have only started scatting relatively recently myself and actually compose a lot of my own. It's a long road learning how to do it and I have found writing them out is a route in for me. I love transcribing Chet and Ella's scats; I am always impressed by how in the pocket their rhythms are, along with the accuracy of pitch and the beauty of their melodic lines. I am just as much influenced by instrumentalists. I transcribe more piano and trumpet parts than I do vocalists. Some favourites of mine are Kenny Drew, Junior Mance, Bobby Hackett, Antonio Carlos Jobim and Louis Armstrong.

What do you think about the jazz scene in Brighton generally?

I think we have got a high standard of musicianship in Brighton. Maybe that's why we have a thriving scene here. There's high quality music on somewhere virtually every night of the week from The Hand In Hand, The Paris House and The Brunswick, to name a few. We also have The Verdict, a dedicated jazz club, in a relatively small city, which is pretty special. Brighton had some residents from the earlier generation of jazz, listening to them felt like hearing the real thing and amazing luck to have heard in the flesh, so beautiful and so in the pocket. In particular I am thinking of trumpeter Jo Hunter and the singer Joe Lee Wilson.

I know that you sing many songs

from the bossa nova era. How important do you think that style has been to jazz over the years?

Very important I would say. Growing up listening to my dad play at home and at gigs, I assumed bossa nova was just another part of the jazz sound, like the difference between a ballad and a swing number, another colour and variation on a theme. It was not until later that I realised it was a whole genre from another country and I started to listen to and love the original recordings of the great Brazilian composers. The bossa nova composers like Jobim were so brilliant at writing songs with jazz harmony and jazz melody that to me they make the perfect balance in a performance of jazz, swing and ballads. The jazz greats used them liberally on recordings and at concerts, understanding how good the songs are for jazz sensibility and how interesting the chord sequences can be to improvise on. Over the years I have seen audience reactions to bossa nova and it seems the rhythm is so infectious and somehow familiar that it is really easy to connect with, even for people who consider themselves to be non-jazzers. It is an easy way in to listening to jazz harmony.

Tell us about the 'Ela With Strings' project, how you decided upon it and who your supporting musicians will be.

The title just popped into my head one morning when I woke up! My partner, guitarist Matt Wall, has written various arrangements that I have really loved over the years.

Quite a few have been for the Three Little Birds vocal harmony group I am part of with Sara Oschlag and Rachel Simpson. Others are just for fun or for larger jazz ensembles with horns, so I thought he might enjoy or be persuaded to write some for our trio with trombonist Tim Wade plus a string quartet. I imagined we might do one or two and make videos for them as we have with other of his arrangements (a Christmas one with the late Jo Hunter being one of my favourites). Matt and I were chatting about it with Tim, and things snowballed. We thought it needed bass and drums, and as Tim was already putting on a show at the fringe called Speakeasy Revival, he said why don't we do a whole concert too. We decided to go for it! I thought the title works on all levels, maybe the jazzers would get the reference to Charlie Parker with strings, although our arrangements are very modest in comparison, writing for a quartet rather than an orchestra. Non-jazzers and people who do not know me might know the name Ella as a jazz name and find the thought of something jazzy with strings appealing too. Our full line-up has now been confirmed as myself on vocals with Tim Wade



(trombone), Matt Wall (guitar), Terry Pack (bass) and Sam Glasson (drums), along with a string section comprising Charlotte Glasson and Sheraine Lynsdale-Knock (violins), Bimbi Urquart (viola) and Jo Giddey (cello).

Let us know some of the songs people will hear on the night.

I think pretty much all the songs are those we picked for their interesting harmony, with some lesser known ones such as *The Night We Called it A Day* by Matt Dennis, *Garden In The Rain* by Carroll Gibbons, plus more familiar ones such as *Someone To Watch Over Me* by the Gershwins. I am pleased that Matt is also going to

debut some of his original compositions and we also have some interesting bossas in the concert, such as *Adeus* by Edu Lobo and *O Grande Amor* by Jobim.

Ella With Strings

Ella With Strings will take place at The Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton as part of the re-scheduled Brighton Fringe Festival in September or October.

www.elasouthgate.co.uk

Lockdown Diaries

Jennifer Left



Photo: Lisa Wormsley

When I first heard about C19, I think I was fairly typical and crap in my response to it all. Ashamedly dismissive, like 'oh, that's happening over there', skimmed it over and continued about my day. It wasn't until members of our team, who have family over in Italy, started stressing their concerns, that I really started to sit up and listen. I watched the news everyday, limited the number of customers allowed on the premises (which is hard in a pub as tiny as The Hand in Hand) and took card payments only, along with lashings of homemade antibac gel, as it was completely sold out across town. I had staff members in tears

upstairs, scared about the virus, their family and friends, how big plans were being cancelled left right and centre, what life was going to be like, how long is this going to last? All I could say was that it was going to be alright, and we would get through it. Tensions rose when the government advised the public to not go to pubs and restaurants, yet we had to stay open. I really felt like I was putting my staff and regulars at risk, but I felt forced to remain open in some capacity in order to keep some income coming in to pay them all. Like the Titanic sinking and we were the orchestra playing. That week was horrendous. When

Friday 21st March came and I listened to the daily C19 government update, Johnson announced the closure of pubs. I didn't wait until the end of service. It was 5.20pm, I got up, walked upstairs to the pub kitchen and cried. I cried with relief, as I had felt I was putting people I love at risk, cried because I've never known the pub to shut dating back to 1850, and cried because I was tired, like a super deep ancient tiredness from holding things up constantly over the past 5 years. I dried my eyes, took a deep breath, walked back downstairs, gave everyone a drink on the house and at 5.30pm shut the doors. Letting them out one by one as they finished their last sup. I drank with very close friends and my husband until the sun came up. Then I slept for a week.

Straight off the bat, I was offered financial support from friends' savings in order to pay the bills and keep staff afloat. I hadn't asked for any financial help, this was honest acts of kindness from people who know us and know how important the pub is to the community. The Hand in Hand is so much more than 'just a pub'. That really, really blew me away. The fact that people from all over the country were looking past their own circumstances, and one of the first things that sprung to mind was The Hand in Hand down in Brighton. That's how special this place is, folk carry The Hand in Hand in their hearts. I turned down the kind offers as I knew government help would be on its way. We cleaned everything and

slowly worked through a to do list. Regulars would stop by and say hello through the window. I think we all thought, 3 weeks and we'll all be playing out again. I don't know why. Why did we think 'it would just go away'. Like a blip or a phase?

Three weeks came and went through a fog of booze, Zoom hangouts, and Tiger King. I made little cheer-up parcels for staff, sent playlists and bits to try and keep connected and our spirits high, they are family to us. Even though the pub is closed, I open the curtains everyday and open the door in case regulars pass by and we chat from a safe distance. I sat for a bit and waited. Pacing around in my head, slowly realising that Covid isn't going to disappear, there isn't an end. The doors aren't going to suddenly open and everyone will come flooding back in. Covid is here now and life is going to be a different version for a while, until we can collectively make our environment safe for each other once again. That is going to take time, and I can't sit here waiting, I need to adapt to this new world we have found ourselves in.

I think as humans, we like routine. So everyday I walk across from the cottage, make coffee, open the curtains and sit down and start planning. We are opening a beer hatch and I am starting up a courier service for our beer to be delivered to your door by a familiar face. It's important to keep in touch with our regulars, from a safe distance, so being the one to deliver the beer to their doorstep



Photo: Lisa Wormsley

and not a third party, is important for both sides. I know that this won't be the case forever, and we all will meet again, so I am being patient and getting used to the idea of things being different for a while.

I often daydream about the pub being busy. I look around and imagine everyone laughing and singing. I feel bad about the times I've been grumpy and complained about being tired. I miss them all so much. I feel confident about the future as we are checking in with each other more and really mean it when we ask each other 'are you ok? Can I help you in any way?' I really want to hug people so badly. I want to drink wine and go dancing with my friends. It is going to be so beautiful when that

happens again. Someone said to me the other day that they realised a pub wasn't just somewhere to go and get drunk. Pubs and the hospitality industry are important for social interaction and a sense of community. What's the point in working your ass off day in and day out, if you don't have the reward of music, art, beautiful food and drink to share with friends and family. We're out of balance, but we'll find it again and I'm confident that we will slowly and safely find ourselves back to one another. Hopefully with a better understanding and consideration for the world and the environment we live in.

Jennifer Left owns and runs The Hand In Hand pub in Kempton, Brighton.

Big Band Scene

Patrick Billingham



Photo: Patrick Billingham

In case you hadn't heard, the Brighton Festival 2020, due to take place this month, has been cancelled. Which is irrelevant to the big band scene. At the moment, the Fringe, which is relevant, has been postponed until the Autumn, including, hopefully, the big band events therein.

There is some talk about a partial lifting of lockdown in the next few weeks, to prevent total economic collapse. I suspect that pubs, restaurants and places of entertainment are near the bottom of the list for a gradual resumption of activity. I hope I am wrong.

We are losing a local big band stalwart. Worthing based drummer Derek Roberts, is moving to Scotland to join his daughter and her family.

He has been active in the local big band scene since moving to

Sussex in 2006. He spent 13 years with the Milestone Big Band, formerly the Charlwood Big Band, based just across the county border in Surrey, but which ventured into Sussex for the occasional gig. While depping with the Sussex Jazz Orchestra in the late 2000s, he met bandleader Les Paul. Les was about to lose his drummer from his eponymous big band and invited Derek to join him. Where he stayed for a decade or so, until his recent resignation.

Other local big bands, in the county and across the border, privileged to have Derek in the drum chair include The Kingswood Monday Band, the Conchord Big Band, the Somethin' Else Big Band from Guildford, Mike Bosley's big band from Bognor, the Sidewinder Big Band and the Ron Green Big Band, both from Cranleigh, the Studio 9 Orchestra, Sounds of Swing, Happy

Days Big Band, the Fred Woods Big Band, the Legionnaires, and Swingshift.

All being well, this is not a permanent loss. Derek is leaving a kit down here, and hopes to drop in from time to time.

Some very sad news. Talented multi-instrumentalist Jerry Dearden has died. I first met him when he joined the trombone section of the Sussex Jazz Orchestra. Later he enjoyed a brief return as a member of the rhythm section where his spectacular bass playing was greatly appreciated. He had a long association with the Paul Busby Big Band, later The One World Orchestra, in which he ended up on guitar. Local big band enthusiasts with long memories will recall his trumpeter father Max, who ran the Max Dearden Big Band for many years

until his retirement in the late 1980s. If anyone has particular fond memories of Jerry, please let me know and I will attempt to include them in next month's column.

Next month: Possibly some news and probably some views. If you would like your band featured, and I have not already contacted you, please get in touch. Or if there is any other information, perhaps about what various bands are planning during lockdown, or feedback on this column, that you would like me to include in June's Big Band Scene, please send it to me by Tuesday 12th May. My email address is g8aac@yahoo.co.uk.

Words... Agnes Keplinger



I was born in Linz in Austria. When I was 8 years old we moved to a small village by a lake, it is a beautiful place with crystal clear water, surrounded by mountains, fields and farms.

Up until the age of 6 (when we start primary school in Austria) I was at home with my mum, I didn't go to kindergarten. Once a week I went to a Carl Orff playgroup, which was a kind of early musical education. Then I started cello lessons.

My mum is a professional musician. She studied concert organ, at the same conservatoire I went to later. She was keen to practise with us on a daily basis. My dad, who was an architect, has always been a classical music lover.

My mum used to make clothes for us and herself when we were little. We looked quite different to other kids, but I love looking back on it now.

The one event that influenced the way I grew up the most must have been our move to the countryside. For me it meant freedom, and I spent lots of time outdoors.

From about 12 years onwards I was properly obsessed with horses. Me and my best friend went to a small farm almost on a daily basis, where we were looking after 'our' horses (we didn't own them, but the farmer literally let us do whatever we wanted with them), and also generally helped at the farm.

My last school was probably the most influential. There is only one 'Musikgymnasium' in each region of Austria, so students from around the country come together. We finished school every day between 12 and 1pm, to give us time for practising our instruments.

In 2005 I came to Brighton to study, and basically never left. My housemate who played the violin (I still live in this amazing house, which has seen so many jam sessions and music parties over the years!!) convinced me to join Brighton Jazz School. I met so many amazing people and developed long lasting friendships.

I started to really enjoy practising, as now it seemed my practice had become more varied, and there was more to it than just learning how to play something perfectly.

I have been a support worker for many

years. One of my jobs is in a day centre with people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and challenging behaviours. I have also worked as a job coach, supporting people with learning difficulties into paid work, and most recently started working as a teaching assistant at a special needs school. At the day centre we do a lot of art and music, and we have a theatre group which performed as part of the Fringe Festival twice.

Brighton has an amazing musical community. We are so lucky, it has provided me and my boyfriend with lots of opportunities to further our music careers. I now make a good part of my living from music.

Being at the conservatoire there was so many people that were better than me. Back then, part of me thought if I couldn't be the best, what would be the point of pursuing a career in it. Now I know that this is nonsense. We all have our own unique paths in life, and as soon as we let go of this kind of thinking we make way for good things to happen.

I am always excited about the future. I have always been a dreamer and love making plans. I just need to be careful I don't spend more time planning than executing what I am working on. I find it hard to get things started sometimes. I can get intimidated by things that are new, and I need to learn to move on, so I don't stick with the same things for too long.

It is the technical challenges that I have had to overcome, and I still have a long way to go. But now I appreciate and enjoy the aspect that you never stop learning, instead of beating myself up over things I am not good at.

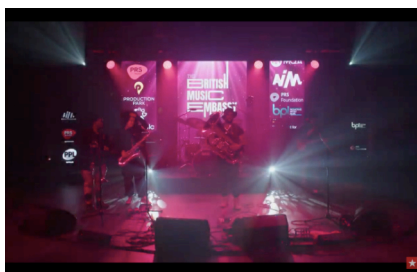
I am proud that I have managed to find the things I care and feel passionate about, and am excited to have some musical projects and collaborations planned. I want to carry on developing my playing (classical and jazz) and my teaching.

Words: Agnes Keplinger

Photo: Lisa Wormsley

Hear Agnes perform with Pilar Onares on *Magical Moments* [here](#).

Live Stream Reviews



British Embassy Live Sessions: Daniel Casimir & Tess Hirst + Theon Cross

In association with Jazz Re:freshed
Wednesday 18th March, 2020

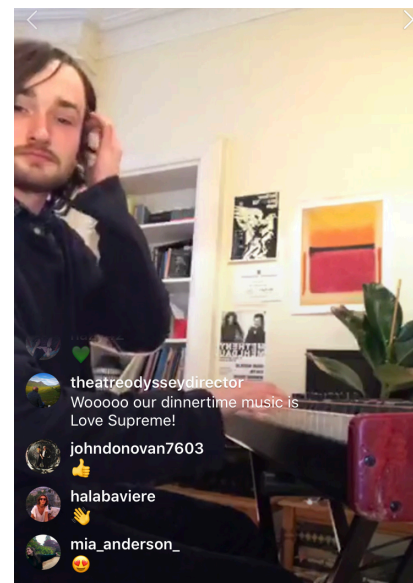
For many of us the return of spring is an exciting time, when everyone, musician and audience alike come fully out of hibernation to pack out the rooms of multiple venues hosting gigs and late night jam sessions. However, the reality that has come to light from this outbreak crisis is a different one to what most expected, with the atmosphere in a tense knot of unpredictability and isolation. This has had a huge knock-on effect for the live music industry with performing artists left with empty calendars and heavy hearts. Thankfully with the help of a few forward thinking and tech savvy individuals at hand, artists have still been able to bring their shows and messages to the homes of their audiences via live internet streaming. This was seen in full swing at this month's British Embassy Sessions featuring strong performances from powerhouse duo bassist Daniel Casimir and vocalist Tess Hirst and an intense energetic set from tuba titan, Theon Cross. Hirst and Casimir

were first to the stage, bringing with them their own brand of UK neo-soul jazz, and a killer band to bring it to life. Performing a set of tunes from their latest release *These Days*, which was released in the winter of last year, each song a statement on the current times and the changes appearing on the streets of London. Through tunes like *What Did I Do?* where Hirst gently utters the phrase "Nothing real happens in Dalston anymore", a lament at how things so familiar and close to you can so suddenly change in this big city. Backing the aforementioned bandleaders we found the familiar faces of Binker Golding and Chelsea Carmichael, both on tenor sax and both creating some fantastic interplay along with a solid rhythm section consisting of Toby Carpenter on guitar and Olly Sarkar on drums.

Next up was a fiery set from Theon Cross. The London tuba player and composer quickly shot to stardom with the release of his debut album *Fyah*, as well as his playing with renowned jazz outfit Sons of Kemet. Known for his intense playing and rich full-on sound, Cross's compositions are rife with heavy pulsating riffs and infectious grooves. The highlight track of the set had to be *Radiation*, built around a chest-thumping bassline dragging hard on a straight up and persistent drum beat, almost as if Rage Against The Machine had abandoned their guitars for brass. Drums were as intense and relentless as the bass grooves, while the gritty guitar work added more sparks to the fyah! Nathaniel Cross stepped up to deliver a solo of pure conviction in the last section as the tune drew to a close. After a few

gentle words of gratitude and well wishing on our current crisis, the bandleader turns to strike up the tune that brings this blazing set to a close. With the soul-packed performance of Hirst and Casimir next to the hypnotic and intense sounds of Theon Cross, the British Embassy Session was a success! Even in this unfortunate time, artists are still able to put out their message and continue as a source of hope for many.

George Richardson



Live Supreme: Fergus McCreadie + Rob Luft & Elena Duni + Georgia Cécile

Presented by Love Supreme Festival
via IG Live

Wednesday April 1st, 2020

Love Supreme are refusing to be crushed by the cruel April Fool's trick that has confined us all to voluntary

house arrest, and have moved their Supreme Standards programme into the freedom of the digital realm via IG Live. This delivers us into a corner of **Fergus McCreadie's** living room: the performance conventions of livestream gig etiquette are still evolving but Fergus manages to give us an unaffectedly warm welcome to camera and launches into *Ardbeg* from his debut album. The exigencies of the moment have deprived Fergus of his band and relegated him to an electronic keyboard but he overcomes both these restrictions: the celtic tonality of the melody builds naturally into a series of rippling arpeggios delivered with a very precise time and articulation, rising and falling like a Scottish landscape. Fergus has a nice line in relaxed candid chat, reacting to the live comments drifting up the screen before treating us to his as yet unreleased composition *Across Flatlands* which uses a similarly static harmonic base to create an impressionistic colour piece, affording ample opportunity for an impressive display of two handed independence, speed and precision. *Mull* is a romantic rubato ballad well suited for the occasion and the commitment and emotional intensity survives the journey across the 4G network to sound genuinely affecting.

Rob Luft is quarantined with his pedalboard and his partner **Elena Duni**, and together they break into an original arrangement of a traditional Albanian song. Elena's voice soars in plaintive melody over Rob's precise, rhythmically intricate accompaniment: he uses his loop pedal to add chords and counterpoint, and his clean tone and precise articulation mean that every part is clear and distinct. Next there's an original co-composition, a



folk-tinged ballad with Elena's voice clear and emotionally resonant: Rob delivers a superb solo, using his effects to conjure up a giant reverb and magically appearing volume swell chords. There's another Albanian tune, perfectly suited to Rob's ingenious multi-part voicings: his use of eastern-sounding ornamentation echoes Elena's vocal inflections without sounding trite or superficial, and his tapping technique creates a verdant forest of notes around Elena's direct, emotional but unsentimental delivery. Serge Gainsbourg's *Couleur Café* gets a bouncy Caribbean flavoured reading that makes a perfect session sign off. There's a real match with McCreadie, both in the exploration of folk traditions and in the mix of emotional directness and precise delivery.

Let's hope that **Georgia Cécile** has music-loving, appreciative neighbours, as the power of her unamplified voice must be rattling the windows as it rises to a climactic held note on her original *Heartbeats*. Sensitively accompanied by her

pianist partner, who also contributes some nicely judged solos, she turns in a bravura performance of standards and originals, undaunted by the artificiality of the situation. *Come Summertime* swings like the clappers, her stream-of-consciousness original is genuinely moving, and her finale on Billy Taylor's *I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free* is as heartfelt as it is apposite. It's a fitting end to the mini-gig series.

Love Supreme chose the Instagram Live feature to broadcast this evening's performances. While the platform allows each video to stay up for 24 hours, its time-restricted format and interactive facility does convey the immediacy of the performance quite well. However, it's only available on mobile devices, which means that we're stuck on vertical mode (much to the annoyance of one gentleman in the audience who sends out a series of increasingly tetchy demands for landscape format, before quitting), and perhaps accounts for what seems like a low audience take-up, given the popularity of Love Supreme and the superb quality of the performances delivered tonight. The livestream is an evolving form and lessons are being learned.

Eddie Myer

Live at The Lescar: Sam Leak
Presented by The Lescar, Sheffield,
via Facebook Live
Friday April 3rd, 2020

As we enter the third week of lockdown, the imperative 'adapt to survive' has never seemed as urgent.



While musicians and audiences are exploring the affordances of various livestream platforms to satisfy their collective yen for live performance, what will become of the precarious community of venues who provide a network of jazz-friendly oases across the UK? Without the enthusiasm and dedication of local promoters and the indulgence of sympathetic landlords there won't be much of a live circuit to return to once conditions return to some version of what we used to call normality: how can they migrate to the digital world as a survival strategy?

Sheffield's Jazz At The Lescar is just such an enterprise, and tonight they're presenting us with a possible solution. They've joined forces with highly-rated young pianist Sam Leak to bring us a solo recital from Sam's personal isolation in his living room, but streamed via a Facebook livestream event set up by the Lescar, promoted to its regular patrons (but available to everyone) and accessed after paying an 'entry fee' to the Lescar itself. There's a pre-recorded welcome from promoter Jez Matthews, and even a post-gig raffle to replicate the irl experience as closely as possible.

Sam appears on the event page punctually at 8pm, seated at the piano in front of a set of fairy lights artfully deployed to provide a sense of occasion. The wide-ranging set

demonstrates his adventurous genre-crossing musical sensibility, with a surprise at every turn and no source of inspiration off-limits: a chiming right hand figure, hovering above a set of plangent descending chords, resolves into a reading of The Verve's *Bittersweet Symphony*, which then mutates via a thunderous tremolo into a ballad rendition of The Kinks' *Waterloo Sunset*. Leak's stark harmonies eschew any hint of muzak-y sentimentality, and the song's mournful cadences make for perfect isolation listening. There's a pensive Ingrid Laubrock inspired deconstruction of the jam session favourite *Beatrice*, which leads naturally into a direct tribute to John Taylor via one of the master's compositions, with the harmony slowly shifting and blurring into chords like massed clouds drifting overhead. By contrast the venerable standard *How About You* gets a sprightly swinging outing, with fluid single note lines bouncing off a lattice of finely meshed left hand figures, and *Berkshire Blues* swings just as hard in a joyous interpretation full of melody. There's a reworking of Britten via Jeff Buckley that segues naturally into a Meldhau tune, and an original by Sam - an un-named Tayloresque musing that develops over a lilting ostinato then breaks down into an impressionistic fog of harmonic shading. *If I Should Lose You* is a perfect finale, balanced between a hopeful swing and a bittersweet melancholy. The experiment is an artistic success - let's hope it points the way to a commercial one as well.

Eddie Myer

Album Q&A: George Colligan



Your latest album, *Live in Arklow*, how did it come about?

Darren Beckett and I played many times in New York in the late 1990s. We sort of lost touch as Darren started doing more touring gigs with various rock groups. I reconnected with him in late 2018; Darren was traveling and he happened to be in Portland, Oregon, where I currently live. Darren reached out and we discussed trying to play again in the future. He was able to organize a trio tour of Ireland and the U.K. in 2019. I, Darren, and bassist Dave Redmond had an instant chemistry. Every night was fantastic, but the night at the church in Arklow was especially amazing in terms of everything being right: the audience, the piano, the sound of the room, the interaction. We are lucky that it was captured, and hopefully we will reschedule our album release tour.

Tell us about the musicians on the album.

As I said, Darren Beckett and I had some great gigs and recordings in the late 90s. We were both on the New York scene when it was extremely vibrant. We always had a great rhythmic connection; in fact we had a trio with bassist Doug Weiss for a brief time. We recorded as a trio a few times for Steeplechase, including a trio record called *Agent*

99. It was uncanny that after not playing much for almost 20 years, Darren and I sort of musically picked up right where we left off. I had never met Dave Redmond before the tour, but he has surely become one of my favorite bassists. He's a great guy and extremely easy to work with. He plays the bass on a high level, but firstly a team player, which is crucial for a jazz trio. It's a great combination of musicians and I'm looking forward to more performances soon.

How have you been coping with the lockdown?

It's a very surreal situation. I'm more worried about the lack of federal leadership in my country than the actual pandemic. The state of Oregon seems as though it has not been hit as hard as some other parts of the U.S. I'm hoping it stays that way and we can flatten the curve. I teach at Portland State University and all of our classes are being taught online for the rest of the school year. Not only was our album release tour cancelled, but essentially all of my performances from mid-March through April and possibly May are all cancelled. It's very troublesome in terms of, when hopefully things return to normal, whether there will be a jazz scene in the foreseeable future. We already have few true jazz venues in Portland and I am hoping that those venues will be able to come roaring back. At the very least, my hope is that with this forced isolation, the aftermath will make people realize how special live music can be and to not take anything for granted.

Album Review



George Colligan Trio *Live In Arklow* (Ubuntu UBU0055CD)

Colligan has gained a formidable reputation as a toughly virtuosic all-rounder who's equally at home playing funk, free or at the cutting twisty-composition edge of the contemporary mainstream. What sets him apart in particular is his ability to swing, and swing hard - a facility that places him in the lineage not only of post-Herbie Hancock and Jarrett impressionists but also of later interpreters of the legacy of Wynton Kelly and Sonny Clark, like Mulgrew Miller, Benny Green and John Hicks. It's this latter side that is triumphantly brought to the fore in this super-vibey set of live recordings from the recent Bray Jazz Festival. The live sound from the Arklow Methodist Church is detailed and punchy but free of studio sheen and enlivened with a very natural sounding reverb that conjures up some of the raw, unvarnished directness of classic sides from the 1950s, and the trio's energy and empathy simply bursts out of the speakers. Opener *Jumped Spring* crackles with hot,

swinging ideas from the inexhaustible Colligan, while the rhythm team drive him ever onwards. Darren Beckett's drums sound enormous, all the better to capture the energy of his explosive trades on *Spring*, while his snare backbeat drives the funk-rock *Lost On Fourth Avenue* to stadium levels of intensity. *Again With Attitude* dials in some crashing McCoy Tyner left hand for added drama, and Dave Redmond impresses with the fluency and accuracy of his solo statement, while Beckett gets an opportunity to set off further fireworks of his own. *What Is This Thing Called Love* is refreshed by an unexpected ballad interpretation; *The Influence Of Jazz* is a high-intensity latin romp; and closer *Usain* captures the headlong rushing speed and focus of its eponymous athletic hero with Redmond solid as a rock and Beckett dropping bombs aplenty. There's an abundance of inspired playing on this album but at the same time it feels like there's never a wasted note, so in tune are the trio with each other, and so undeniable is their collective energy. A ton of fun.

Eddie Myer

Album Q&A: Tom Green

You've composed and arranged for lots of different line ups, what do you like most about the septet?

I grew up playing in big bands and chamber groups as many trombonists will have done, so I think I've always been drawn to the sound of harmonies played by a horn section. The septet contains the core elements of a big band (one instrument from each section) and is still manageable to organise and to tour - although obviously touring is unfortunately on hold for the moment. As a composer writing for four horns means I can play with counterpoint, explore different harmonic ideas within the horn section or even have them playing on their own with no rhythm section. It hopefully makes a varied record, as individual soloists can be featured on different tracks and I can create a huge variety of different moods and sounds than would be possible with a quartet for example.

Does it help to write for people that you know and perform with regularly?

Absolutely - in fact, although I put the band together during the time I was studying at the Royal Academy for a masters degree, some of the connections go back much further than that. James Davison (trumpet) and I grew up playing jazz together in Cambridge and often snuck into local pubs while we were teenagers to go to jam sessions. I met Misha Mullov-Abbado (bass) at university where we played in big bands together before I even started doing any composing, and Tommy Andrews (alto) and Sam James (piano) I met through other connections on the London scene, even though they weren't studying at the Academy. I love writing for people I know - for example the track *Jack O'Lantern* I always knew would be a tenor feature for Sam Miles as he has such a beautiful sound and melodic way of playing, and that track's folk style suits him perfectly. I enjoy writing in odd time signatures and I know Scott Chapman (drums) is always

up for the challenge - the track *Champagne Sky* has a particularly tricky drum solo section that he makes sound incredibly musical. I'm also lucky that James Davison can play more of a lead trumpet role when required - check out the end of *Seattler*!

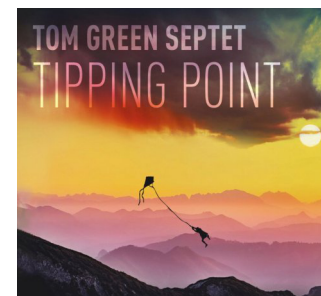
Do you have a favourite track on the album that means a lot to you?

The composition I'm most proud of is probably *Between Now and Never*, which is the only ballad on the album and a feature for Sam James at the piano. I was going through some challenges in my personal life at the time I wrote it - I distinctly remember being away from home, I had a few hours in a cramped room with a terrible sounding digital piano and the piece just flowed very organically from how I was feeling. The process of composing really brought me some peace at that time, and listening to it now makes me appreciate the importance of having hope and taking positive action when addressing individual and global challenges, themes that run through the whole album. The sheet music also fits on only one piece of A4 whereas some of my tunes require 10 pages or more - simplicity is often best!

The only cover on the album is by Joni Mitchell. What do you like most about her compositions?

I love folk music and Joni's writing and playing often bridges the gap between folk and jazz. Everything about her recordings is unique - her singing is unassuming and carefree and her lyrics are really inventive. The harmonic progression in the bridge of *My Old Man* is so unusual I had to do an arrangement of it for the septet. Joni has always had strong connections to jazz - her last album *Travelogue* features Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Kenny Wheeler and Brian Blade alongside amazing arrangements by Vince Mendoza for example - you can't get a much better lineup than that!

Album Review



Tom Green Septet
Tipping Point
(Spark!)

Trombonist Tom Green has been exerting a wholesome influence for the good on the UK jazz scene for some years now: as well as creating employment opportunities for his fellow young jazz artists by pursuing a busy schedule as bandleader and arranger, he's joint boss of the Spark! label whose mission statement is "to support emerging jazz and creative music artists"; this is the second release for his own septet, with a line-up populated by an impressive array of bandleaders, composers and performers and fellow Royal Academy graduates who are also personal friends; and 20% of proceeds are to go to various charities dedicated to restoring the forests across the world. However, this isn't an academic exercise in worthiness or an exhibition display of chops: the band is as tight, responsive and accomplished as you might expect, but the album derives its power and character from the quality of the compositions, all written by Green (apart from an imaginative expansion on Joni Mitchell's *My Old Man*) and evidencing a thorough command of the band's resources, a sure feel for melody and a real breadth of emotional engagement. The contrapuntal voices and big brassy chords of *Kaleidoscope* demonstrate how

Green makes the most out of the four-horn line-up to create a breadth of textures that imply a much larger line-up; all the soloists excel, from Tommy Andrews' cuttily bittersweet alto on *Tipping Point*, to Sam Miles' tenor workout on *Jack O'Lantern*, while the rhythm team revel in the challenges of the material and audibly delight in being as precise or flamboyant as the occasion demands - check drummer Chapman's workout on the end of the phrygian *Gil Evans* flavoured *Kaleidoscope*. Green's trombone is full-toned and nimble, sitting nicely alongside Mullov-Abbado's equally precise and athletic bass, and pianist Sam James fills out the arrangements adroitly and impresses with his dynamic sensitivity on features like *Champagne Sky* - his trades with Mullov-Abbado on *Jack O'Lantern* are a delight. There's an impressive attention to detail in the arrangements but they flow very naturally and never sound fussy or cluttered, and the sense of comradeship and benign good intentions comes across very clearly even in the complexity of *Jack O'Lantern* which still retains an almost folkloric melodicism. Uplifting music for these trying times.

Eddie Myer

Album Q&A: Alex Hitchcock

Your new album features two tenors, yourself and Tom Barford. How would you characterise your musical relationship?

I don't really know how it's happened that we've ended up quite different as players, given that we share a lot of the same influences. I think our approaches to improvisation complement each other well, which is important in a band that is 50% saxophone! I think in order for the album to be listenable beyond quite a narrow group of hardcore sax enthusiasts we've had to think quite hard about the roles we're playing in relation to each other, and to allow space for each of the musical personalities to come through strongly in the music. I honestly think Tom is up there with the world's top improvising saxophonists, so the whole experience of collaborating with him has been great for my own playing.

How do you go about composing music for the group?

We've tried a new approach where Tom and I will get together and record ourselves improvising duets, trying out ideas and passing them between us. Then separately we'll take our favourite bits from the recording and use them as a starting point for a new tune. Obviously the end product can be quite far away from the initial improvised idea, but it means that whoever ends up finishing a particular tune, they've all come from that original moment of spontaneous collaborative composition. We're trying to get to a unified sound where there's surprise and variety between tracks (and, hopefully, albums) but have a go at creating our own sound world at the same time...

How are you coping in the current circumstances, not being able to gig and tour?

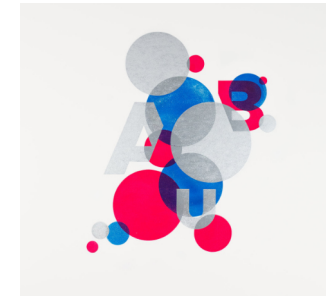
I'm trying to look at the positives where possible! I really miss playing with, and for, other people but I'm enjoying having more time to practise for its own sake

and to work on things I've had parked for ages. It's a chance to take a step back, work out what's next, and start writing for projects that I want to make happen when normal life returns. Being 'strategic' about my own career doesn't come naturally to me so it's been a bit easier to think in that way given a bit of proper headspace. The album with Tom is out at the end of May and the challenges surrounding that are unique seeing as we're not able to tour it straight away, and therefore can't promote the album in the 'normal' way. People have already started to be very innovative through live streaming and different types of digital release – although I'm aware there's a certain amount of debate about the best way of doing that sustainably. Everyone is trying to make the best of the situation in their own way, and I think that's fair enough. It's been a reminder of the strength of the musical community we're lucky to have – people are being really supportive and encouraging of each other. Financially I'm most worried about the period between the end of lockdown and venues reopening, when larger gatherings are allowed, as I can't see government grants covering that time, and other funding organisations are already stretched. The longer that period is, the worse it will be, and I think that applies to a huge amount of creative freelancers too – not just musicians.

How are you spending your days? Are you in your pyjamas all day watching Netflix?

I've kind of allowed myself to do that at weekends, yeah! I've been keeping to a pretty set routine during the week – I have no idea how long that's going to last but it's been helpful so far, trying to get a balance between different bits so I'm not burning out (and driving neighbours up the wall) by just doing one thing. I love getting to spend more time at home with my girlfriend, I can't believe how little we did that pre-coronavirus.

Album Review



AUB
AUB
(Edition)

Twin tenorists Hitchcock and Barford have already established formidable reputations as up-and-coming saxophone hotshots: both combine a deep engagement with the jazz tradition with an awareness of cutting edge manifestations, the comprehensive technique of post-Brecker stylists like Chris Potter and Seamus Blake, and the adventurous rhythmic conceptions of the contemporary NYC players. Their voices, both as composers and performers, are very well-matched – Barford has a little more edge and stridency to his tone but when they blend together as on the ingeniously structured *Valencia* it's hard to tell who's playing what. This project toured as a kind of post-Coleman twin-horn free-bop outfit, but this studio offering presents a far more developed vision. The writing is closely plotted to allow bursts of freedom within some very tight structures, and the textural palette is expanded with harmoniser effects, distortion and washes of analogue synths – sometimes, as on *Glitch* all at once – to create a kind of very contemporary fusion sound. All the tunes are around the five minute mark and there's not a single wasted moment in the tight, punchy arrangements. Maddren and Ireland tackle the challenging rhythmic

figures with tremendous gusto and step forward to provide additional melodic content when required, as on the sonorous solo bass intro to *Rufio*; Maddren moves effortlessly between punchy deep-toned snare rock groove, and subtle textural playing on *Ice Man* under Ireland's virtuosic explorations. *Dual Reality* has an extended twin-part written piece for both saxes that slowly peels apart into freedom over a deep bass tone; *Groundhog Day* has the kind of polymetric flexibility pioneered by Dave Holland's various outfits over which both horns soar. This is a real gem of an album with a distinctive sound of its own, an impressive attention to detail and some red hot blowing to seal the deal.

Eddie Myer

Alex Hitchcock, tenor sax; Tom Barford, tenor sax; Fergus Ireland, bass; James Maddren, drums.

Album Q&A: Rob Luft

How have you developed and what have you learnt since your debut album?

After *Riser* was released on Edition Records in July 2017, I embarked on a nationwide tour with my quintet in the winter of 2018. This was an incredible experience for me, as it was the very first time that I took my original music on the road. It was incredibly life-affirming to see how well the music was received by audiences across the board - young and old, in the big cities as well as in the more provincial smaller towns, and it was also really wonderful to see complementary reviews coming in from critics and jazz promoters too. This positive experience instilled within me the motivation to go further with my compositional endeavours, and to go deeper in the exploration of the sound-world of my quintet. I feel as though I've developed an almost telepathic connection with the members of my band, and when I compose for the guys these days, I barely need to write any notes on the manuscript paper anymore! They are always so 'inside' the music that they are seemingly able to make magical textures and grooves from minimal compositional material. The new album is more of a musical evolution than a revolution for me, in the sense that it is an attempt to develop the band sound that we laid the foundations for on *Riser* back in 2017. The addition of Byron Wallen's gorgeous trumpet playing and Luna Cohen's subtle backing vocals on the title track and the closing track *Expect The Unexpected* both bring a new colour to the sound of the original quintet line-up, and I feel that they both bring something fresh to the music too.

What inspired the new album, *Life Is The Dancer*?

The inspiration for the title of my new album is a fascinating one. The phrase 'Life is the Dancer' comes from a quote by the American spiritualist Eckhart Tolle: "Life is the dancer and you are the

dance". The notion behind this particular phrase really captivated me, in the sense that is saying that 'life lives you', rather than you live your own life. I really believe that this idea helps us all to simply go with the vigorous flow of life and its constantly changing nature. It allows us to accept that the past is in our heads and that the future is very much in our hands!

How are things going with live streaming, rather than touring and gigging?

The experience of doing live-streaming concerts via YouTube, Facebook & Instagram Live formats has been a truly fascinating one! Each of these platforms have their upsides and downsides, and it has proved a real learning curve getting used to this totally new medium of disseminating one's music. I really enjoyed doing a couple of Instagram Live videos directly from my living room sofa simply using my iPhone in 'selfie' orientation to record my performance. What is really fantastic with IG live is that viewers can add their comments and support whilst you are actually playing, and as you finish each song you can take a moment to read their comments from your iPhone's screen before commencing the next piece in your set. For me, this resembles a jazz gig in some ways, because you actually receive direct feedback from your audience whilst you are playing, much like the rounds of applause that are often delivered at jazz concerts after each musician takes a solo. Obviously, it goes without saying that there is no digital concert format will ever be able to replace that unmistakable euphoria of a live jazz concert in the 'analogue' world, but for now, these platforms are providing an incredibly useful tool for self-promotion.

Album Review



Rob Luft
Life Is The Dancer
(Edition EDN1152)

Rob's last run of public appearances were with the very in-the-tradition organ and tough tenor combo with Dave O'Higgins; this new release shines the spotlight back on his own eclectic versatility. While he's chosen a crew of top-drawer young jazz musicians to work with on this programme of Luft originals, there's a wide range of international influences at work, and the common thread is a preoccupation with melody and an eagerness to engage with the many folk and pop applications of his chosen instrument. In this respect there are parallels with Julian Lage, with whom Luft also shares a delicate precision of articulation and a wonderfully accurate rhythmic sense. There are definite echoes of the hypnotic grooves of the West African guitar tradition in *Life Is A Dancer* (enhanced by Byron Wallen's lush-toned trumpet), while *Tanpura* has a brief glimpse of the vocal glissando technique of South Asia, but Luft is too canny to succumb to the temptations of shallow musical tourism, but rather incorporates the techniques into his own idiosyncratic fusion. *Synesthesia* is the closest we get to the language of twitchy contemporary jazz, and even here it is tempered by

Luft's accessible melodicism, echoed in Joe Webb's wonderfully fluent solo. *Sad Stars* has a bucolic mid-western feel that Metheny might appreciate, with Joe Wright's tenor sax mournfully delicate; Byron Wallen returns on the elegaic *Expect The Unexpected* along with Luna Cohen's evocative vocals, and makes a beautiful closer; while the infectiously grooving *Berlin* makes an irresistible opening invitation, showing how carefully this project has been put together for maximum listening pleasure. Luft only continues to grow in stature as a composer and performer and this latest offering will delight his fans and should widen his audience outside the jazz clubs and beyond.

Eddie Myer

Rob Luft, guitar; Joe Wright, tenor saxophone; Joe Webb, Hammond organ, piano; Tom McCredie, bass; Corrie Dick, drums.

Guests: Byron Wallen, trumpet; Luna Cohen, vocals (both on tracks 2 & 10).

Album Q&A: Kandace Springs



Congratulations on the new album, *The Women Who Raised Me*. It includes a number of collaborations. What qualities do you look for in other artists?

I was so honored to collaborate with all of the guests on my album! I think the most important thing in a collaboration is that the artists complement each other well. If they are too similar it's less interesting. Also, you never want to feel like it's one overshadowing the other. Space is a beautiful thing and there is no need to fill up every space with ad libs etc. I was fortunate to have legends like Norah Jones and Christian McBride on this album so I was in awe of them. I'm so grateful...

What was it like, for example, recording *Angel Eyes* with Norah Jones?

Norah is one of my heroes and honestly it was surreal having her on my album. But she is so down to earth! She makes you feel like she is just hanging out and you've known her forever. We actually had met several times and it was last year that we ran into each other at the Nashville airport in the ladies room! We exchanged numbers and shortly after that I asked her to duet with me on *Angel Eyes*. She actually lived near the studio we recorded at in Brooklyn so we worked

out the arrangement she came up with at her house. Still have to pinch myself!

There's a great range of tunes on the album. If you had to pick a favourite, what would it be?

Wow, that's a tough question... these are all such iconic songs. But I think *Solitude* might be my favorite of all. It's so beautiful and yet haunting. I never get tired of singing it...

With the current situation around Covid-19, how are you dealing with it and how has it affected you?

It's been challenging to say the least. It's such a scary time and so many are suffering. I try not to complain too much although the timing was pretty awful for my album. We had to cancel six months of touring the week before my album came out and of course I was unable to go to any of the markets to promote it. I'm doing a lot of live streamed performances for my fans and spending a lot of time with my girlfriend and my cats - Prince, Nina and Dusty! So I'm getting used to the new abnormal...

Kandace's London show at Alexandra Palace has now been rescheduled to Saturday 31st October.

Album Review



Kandace Springs
The Women Who Raised Me
(Blue Note)

This album is the fifth Blue Note release from the thirty one year old, Nashville born vocalist, pianist and composer who first came to worldwide prominence with her 2016 recording *Soul Eyes*, although until this offering most of her recorded tracks fall into the later category. This is a pity from the jazz fans point of view as she has a perfect voice for the genre and is an excellent jazz pianist as all who have witnessed her sell-out concerts in London over the past few years would confirm. The theme of the album's twelve tracks is in the title, but it is a fair question to ask, 'Is it a jazz album?'. For fifty percent of the time it most defiantly is, as the vocalists that inspired her include the likes of Billie, Carmen, Ella, Astrud and Diana Krall, plus her self-confessed greatest inspiration Norah Jones. The balance of the output, while not lacking in quality at all, can best be described as originating from the soul or R&B genres. The calibre of the supporting artists and most certainly the guests make this an album that is bound for success under any criteria.

As far as the jazz tracks are concerned things get underway with the Bob Dorough classic *Devil May Care*. Here the guest is top bass man Christian McBride whose presence at the head of the mix dominates proceedings alongside the leader's piano and inventive scat

interludes. Norah Jones takes the lead vocal on a slow burning version of *Angel Eyes* with more laid back piano from Kandace preceding a closing vocal duet. *Gentle Rain* has, in the right hands, always been a showstopper and so it is here with the sultry and wonderfully paced vocal benefiting from a partnership with Chris Potter's tenor weaving the kind of magic that only he can. The vocalist's approach to Duke Ellington's *Solitude* is lighter than most, but still full of reflection and pathos. Once again her piano accompaniment is of the highest order and her musical conversations with Chris Potter very worthy of further experiment. The 1938 hit *The Nearness Of You*, has of course been covered by almost everyone from Ella and Frank to Della Reese and Sheena Easton! Here the vocal is drenched with emotion and perfect voice control at the very lowest of tempo's in a performance to stand alongside the very best. *Strange Fruit* is a very dangerous song for anyone to sing, simply because it is just about owned by the great Billie Holiday. A handful of alternative versions have been compared with Billie's but as yet been unable to draw a favourable comparison. This version does however run it close. With only the accompaniment of her own electric keyboards, it's the sheer quality of the voice that although lacking the raw passion of Billie, still locks the listener into the drama and melancholy of Abel Meeropol's tragic lyric.

The balance of the track listing features songs inspired by and associated with artists such as Sade, Bonnie Raitt, Lauryn Hill and Dusty Springfield etc. Not within the broad church of jazz, despite the presence of trumpeter Avishai Cohen on some numbers, but never the less of the highest class, making this recording a very worthwhile purchase for most.

Jim Burlong

Album Q&A: Chip Wickham



You were born and raised in Brighton. Do you still have a connection to the city?

My family and friends still live in Brighton, yes. I have lived outside the UK for 12 years now but still go there regularly and still consider it home in some ways! I like the jazz scene around Brighton and one of my favourite online jazz shows is the Brighton-based *Jazzology* radio show on 1BTN. I have also had a lot of support from Brighton legends like DJ Format. Brighton has always been a cool place for jazz for as long as I can remember. One of my highlights was playing Love Supreme last summer as it was a real homecoming for me musically!! So many faces in the crowd, and it was packed out! Wonderful day, wonderful festival and Sussex jazz at its finest!

Where does the title of your new album, *Blue to Red*, come from?

'Blue to Red' refers to Earth's possible Mars-like future. Mars was once a blue planet. Now there is no atmosphere or life. It's our own senselessness that we're pushing our planet in the same direction. We're heading towards a red planet. The recent events of Covid-19 have only gone on to emphasise how fragile and inter-related we all are. Time for change, time for greatness not greed before Blue turns to Red.

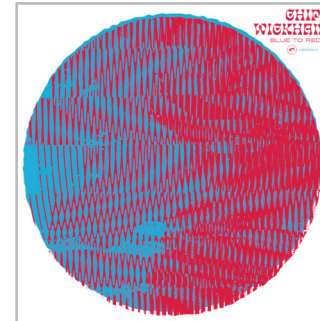
What inspired you the most in creating the album?

While looking for inspiration for this third album I found myself deep into the world of astral journeys and space travel. I think it's a very spiritual source for musicians and especially spiritual jazz. This was my initial starting point for the record, but I soon came round to another way of thinking, that we can't just look up, we have to look around, and when you do, it is *Blue to Red*. It now seems so self-indulgent to look far away to other planets for inspiration and reassurance of our greatness as a species. We need to take care of our own planet before we waste our best efforts trying to put humans further and further into the cosmos! It's a crisis that goes deep into the fundamental nature of how we live and our need to evolve before it's too late. Evolution in a social and economic sense.

Tell us about the musicians and instruments that you have on the album.

I write and produce all my own music and I think that getting the right musicians into the studio is fundamental to getting the right sound for the record. I choose my musicians very carefully. I have changed the sound for this album. The previous albums I had similar musicians, but with this release I recorded it in the UK for the first time and used mostly my UK live band. This album is different. The album sound is very textural with lots of layers from the harp and Rhodes that swirl and float around the arrangements, giving the music a beautiful spiritual sound. The flute melodies drive the sound and the use of electronics and effects provide the final layer.

Album Review



Chip Wickham
Blue to Red
(Lovemonk Records)

By nature London is a consuming city, with so much going on with its rich and colourful music scene and its unimaginable size, it's easy to forget that much happens outside of England's capital. However, if we turn our heads for even a second it instantly becomes clear that this is simply not the case. This is certainly true for the city of Manchester, producing some of the finest artists in the modern jazz scene. Gogo Penguin, Mammal Hands, Matthew Halsall and the legendary Gondwana Records all flew to prominence through its busy music scene. Embracing a very different sound to London's lively afrobeat and electronic dance influenced music scene, the sound coming out of Manchester is much more on the spiritual side of jazz, with heavy nods to Alice Coltrane and Yusef Lateef. Out of this Northern English melting pot emerges a rising star of the UK jazz scene: flautist and composer Chip Wickham. While not a Manchester native, Chip has worked closely with its iconic figures, frequenting the guest soloist's chair on numerous recordings and performances under the record label most associated with jazz in the North. However, in more recent times we have seen Wickham make the transition from soloist to bandleader. His previous album,

the aptly titled *Shamal Wind*, was released in 2018 to a warm and enthusiastic reception. Now, with the release of *Blue to Red*, his third album as leader, Wickham continues his search in the realms of spiritual jazz, this time adding electronics to the mix taking us from our desert meditations to the vast regions of deep space. Starting off on familiar ground as heard on *Shamal Wind*, the atmosphere is a warm wash of swirling sounds and gentle grooves; this time adding a harp to the ensemble to rain down a shower of light notes before the flute announces its presence with an airy statement and attentive solo. The overall dynamic shape of the album is varied and to great effect, with some tracks like the title track, *Blue to Red*, more low burning and spiritual journeys allowing the band leader to explore over the calm and serene backing of his steady rhythm section. Whilst other tracks, namely the tune *Interstellar*, show a slightly different side to Chip Wickham as composer and soloist taking a step away from his signature slow soul-soothing sound to kick up the energy a good few levels with band and leader both bring forward some tunes with a bit of attack. Swapping the piano for a Fender Rhodes and letting this get gritty as the band pushes the energy further, all until taking a step back to shine the light on and let the effects-laden Rhodes slide further and further into the regions of space, and once all is quiet then reappears with Wickham shedding some serious flute, Hendrix style, through a wah-wah pedal. The album ends with a track entitled *Mighty Yusef*, in honour of the great multi-instrumentalist and composer Yusef Lateef, a key influence in the sound of Chip Wickham. With the success of *Shamal Winds* and with the release of *Blue To Red*, Wickham continues on his musical journey as one of the rising stars of British jazz.

George Richardson

Album Reviews



Altar Double Quintet
We Salute The Night
(Real Music House)

There is always a taste of something resembling classical romanticism in what has been coined 'European jazz', which like the phrase 'world music' is a broad term representing so many varied countries, cultures and identities within two small words. Of course such terms are indeed helpful when stacked on the shelf for distribution or on its inception to new listeners. Genre labels can be both a blessing and a curse but fortunately on this release from an all-star double quartet, the music can more than speak for itself. It consists of some of the finest players from Slovakia, Serbia, Hungary and the US that have come together to create something truly unique. Straight up from the beginning there is no small talk as the group dives straight in with the whole band in full swing in the opening tune, *Gypsy Mustache*. This piece carries something of the drive and solid groove found in the hard bop of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, with the rhythm section stomping out a clear path for the

soloists to freely dance over. There is also a good element of the classic romanticism that's more associated with the European jazz tradition throughout the material on this release, with pieces showing a lot more emphasis on slow melancholic and deeply-thought melodies echoing the classical influence ever present in this style of jazz. Frequently we hear the smooth Chopinesque piano runs and gentle minimalistic horn lines. However, the swing is not lost, quite the contrary, the group merges these two different styles with elegance, easily jumping between the uptempo swing of American jazz and the soft lilt of the European style. The piano work of Lubos Sramek is a particular feature of the group's sound, emulating almost simultaneously the styles of Bobby Timmons and Esbjörn Svensson, blending the two into one. The presence of saxophonist and bandleader Nicolaj Nikitin is rarely felt over the listening course of the album, with a couple of short solos here and there, but overall his round tone is mostly heard in the presenting of themes and melodic backing behind soloists. It seems the leader has chosen to concentrate more on directing the band than being in the spotlight. The real gift here definitely has to be the trumpet playing which is spread out between three trumpeters: Juraj Bartos (Slovakia), Tom Harrell (USA) and Kornel Fekete-Kovacs (Hungary). All paint the tunes with their own brand of unique playing. From tune to tune and solo to solo Altar Quartet have really managed to capture the essence of two very important styles of jazz music and have been able to

create a perfect marriage between the two.

George Richardson

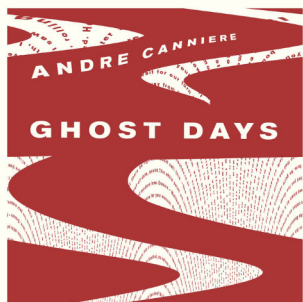


Arevieje
Journey
(single, self-release)

London always has and always will be one of the creative hubs and diverse melting pots for the performing arts from Handel through to Hendrix, who coincidentally both lodged in the same building during their respective times as residents in the city. We have also the recent UK jazz boom which is still running strong on the streets of London with new music and artists appearing regularly in its venues and concert halls. With so much going on it's easy to forget that if we turn our focus south east and just down the road we have the city of Brighton which is also building its own scene, seeing acts like Howes3 and Yakul releasing their own mind-blowing material alongside independent music organisations such as Off Licence Magazine and Mr. Bongo both strongly doing their part in the support and release of new music. It's in Brighton that we encounter

singer and songwriter Arevieje Nahvi and the release of her debut single *Journey*. Already an active figure on the Brighton music scene, Arevieje describes her vocal influences as ranging from Ella Fitzgerald through to Jill Scott among many others, while her songwriting takes influences from a range of genres and styles including jazz, neo-soul, hip hop, dub reggae and world music. She describes this release as a product of her Persian and Jamaican heritage and the cultural history and music that comes along with it. All of this is nicely portrayed in the smooth writing and production that has gone into this release. The looping hypnotic theme and bright backbeat carry us forward in the style of Fatoumata Diawara; a small vocal scat leads us to the arrival of the main vocal line packed full of convictive strength but also pensive. Its lyrics, the voice of reason and question, while acoustic guitar carries out the main melody as it picks out a West African flavoured line sitting nicely on the main groove. The smooth silkiness of the backing vocals cushioned around the lead vocal brings to mind the soulful sound of Lianne La Havas. The overall sound and production is extremely reminiscent of contemporary music giants The Cinematic Orchestra and Slowly Rolling Camera with its smooth mix of acoustic and electronic elements, which are all extremely well done. With a vast number of influences and a driving passion for learning and musical exploration this single is an exciting release and the product of a true musical journey in bloom.

George Richardson



Andre Canniere
Ghost Days
 (Whirlwind WR4753)

Pennsylvania native, UK-based Canniere has assembled an impressive cast of top-flight UK players to realise his follow-up to his acclaimed *The Darkening Blue* release from 2016. It's a development of his adventures into this territory between jazz, folk and fusion, and opening track *Suicides* (actually about ladybirds) sets out the stall to good effect. There's an insistent, funky ostinato groove from Rhodes, acoustic bass and Andrew Bains' tight but light drums over which Brigitte Beraha's clear, uninflected vocals float, then combine with the horns to sketch out coolly minimalist horn charts; then the track builds into more jazz-fusion territory, from an explosive drum break into some increasingly intense trades between the leader's trumpet and Tori Freestone's sax. Both horns lay out their customary hip contemporary jazz language, but Freestone especially seems to be relishing the jazz-rock setting and her sax is full-toned and rhythmic. *Colours* is particularly powerful as a piece of post-rock, shot through with impassioned soloing from the horns over a tight punchy rhythm track,

while *Erasure* has the kind of sombrely uplifting melodic structures that recall Radiohead or Bon Iver as much as Miles Davis, and *My Star* has the hushed, relaxed simplicity of a Norah Jones tune until it opens out into a pair of truly stunning solos from Canniere and Klammer supremo Rick Simpson. Throughout, Canniere and co manage to keep the balance of rock's directness and linear melodic development with a healthy quotient of genuine high-level jazz music content - Canniere says he still sees the music as jazz, as informed by his love of Miles and Freddie Hubbard as by the influences he's absorbed from alt-rock, and followers of both genres will find his engagement to be authentic and engaging. The whole adds up to a fascinatingly individual package that is accessible and challenging at the same time - approach with an open mind for uniquely satisfying results.

Eddie Myer



**Daniel Carter, Matthew Shipp,
 William Parker, Gerald Cleaver**
Welcome Adventure! Vol. 1
 (577 Records)

In these modern times we have experienced the rebirth and re-

establishment of jazz music as a popular and unifying creative art form, with the UK's thriving jazz scene bringing forward the likes of Sons of Kemet and Joe Armon-Jones, alongside the US producing new musical pioneers such as Kamasi Washington and Christian Scott. All of these artists endlessly blend their various influences both current and retro to create the sounds of modern jazz. However, where we have seen the strong influence of classic jazz styles such as bebop and fusion take a firm seat in the musical visions of many current artists, the sound of free jazz has remained as it has been since its inception, illusive and hard to pin down. Yet, it has never failed to remain strong and move the hearts and minds of its listeners, remaining a strong style and influence in today's modern music. This is presented in full fruition in the masterful interplay cooked up between New York free jazz all star quartet consisting of jazz legends saxophonist Daniel Carter, pianist Matthew Shipp, double bassist William Parker and drummer Gerald Cleaver. All four are longstanding names in the free jazz community, with each musician appearing on many amazing releases, whether as an in-demand sideman or accomplished bandleader. Now, here on their 2020 release softly titled *Welcome Adventure Vol. 1* these four musical giants take full advantage of their time together on this recording, consisting of only two lengthy compositional sketches on which the band paints their vivid stories. The first track, titled simply *Majestic Travel Agency*, is a performance of pure drive, starting off with a simple looped statement from Parker and Cleaver creating a thick mechanical groove that the rest of the band

slowly climbs upon before taking off. Both sax and piano exchange the role of soloist, and this continues throughout the majority of the performance until slowly the drive is taken down and the groove gradually disappears leaving the open space to draw the tune to an end, gently edged forward by slurred notes contributed from each instrument until at 13 minutes and 30 seconds it fades to silence for the final time. The second track, *Scintillate*, lasts only a mere four minutes. It straight away kicks off into a slow, moody swing with sax and piano trading small melodic statements while the rhythm section carries them forwards to a quiet fade, leading into the third track, *Ear-regularities*. Starting as a frenetic free for all, with a flurry of notes and musical rambling that gradually builds to resemble something of a groove, as the quartet moves freely onwards embracing the dissonance and chaos. This ensemble, comprising of some of the most important figures in the free jazz world, certainly have a unique chemistry together and through this release they proudly carry the flag of free music into the modern age.

George Richardson





Irreversible Entanglements *Who Sent You?* (International Anthem)

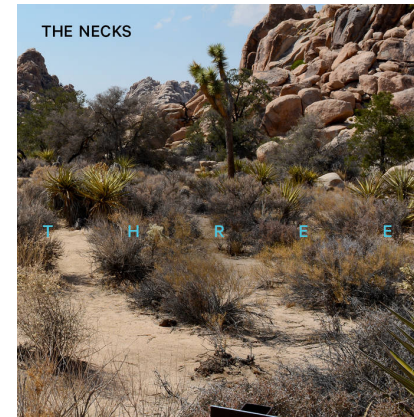
After the release and success of their self-titled album, Chicago-based outfit Irreversible Entanglements certainly secured their place as one of the modern representatives of free jazz and all that it encompasses. Spoken with a clear head and a sober voice, the ensemble continues to spread their message of unity, freedom and dark truths. The spring release of their new album, bluntly titled *Who Sent You?*, is full to bursting point with explosive interplay, walking hand in hand with the intense spoken word of fearless poet, Moor Mother. The first track, *The Code Noir/ Amina* whose introduction is reminiscent of Ornette Coleman's *Lonely Woman* with its pressing drum beat alongside a tumbling bass groove, edging us forward into a mist of slurred horn calls echoing through the frenetic soundscape. Then comes Moor Mother's words of lamentation for a dark past with its message of humanity's confusion, but also its strength; each sentence a call to

arms, with phrases like: "where we forget the names of our ancestors" and "at what point do we stand up?" a clear warning of what will happen to America and indeed humanity if we remain ignorant and do not learn from our history. The title track *Who Sent You*, and its second movement, *Ritual*, bear the trademark sound of the band felt throughout their debut album, the sound of people who are strong and fed up with being disregarded and unheard. The melodic screams and explorations of Eric Dolphy, John Coltrane and Don Cherry, fading to the second movement of the piece, *Ritual*, starting with a horn line that brings to mind the minimalism of Terry Riley, then enters a strong West African style groove from bass and drums, before the chilling voice of Moor Mother returns once more.

While the sounds of chaos, dissonance, freedom and truth are undoubtedly something the group has mastered through their playing together, here on this recording we are introduced to a different side of the band's playing and arrangement with the piece *No Mas* having a more formulated feel in structure and composition. The whole track simmers with a strong Caribbean element, similar to the music of the UK's own Sons of Kemet and Nubya Garcia, with a steely bassline and funky drum beat to match, and all mixed in with the group's own well crafted sound. This album is without doubt a fresh release both for the group as a whole and for the sound of modern music; a rich tapestry of virtuosic interplay and fantastic arrangements upon which a clear image of the true world, albeit not always pretty, is placed for us to witness firsthand. With the spirit of Ornette Coleman in their music and

the humanist message of Nina Simone in their words, Irreversible Entanglements have secured their place as one of the most promising bands in modern jazz.

George Richardson



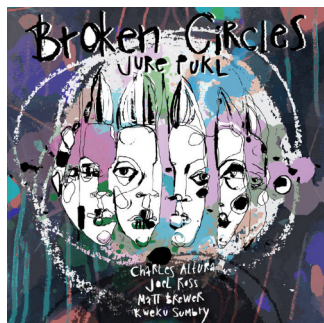
The Necks *Three* (ReR Megacorp Necks14)

This is the Australian post-jazz improv trio's 21st album release, and while it's too much to say that there's an element of career retrospective here, there are nods to their own more recent past: the rocking *Body* from 2018 or the atmos-jazz of 1994's *Aquatic*. Three long tracks make up the album, crafted from the long spontaneous free-form jams on which The Necks have built their live reputation, enriched with overdubs and textural additions to widen the screen. *Bloom* has a hint of the Dusseldorf motorik in unyielding chatter of percussion, like a busy factory working at full output,

creating a dense bed of sound onto which Lloyd Swanton gingerly lowers massive blobs of bass guitar, while Abrahams drapes poignant minor chords over the top. There's additional synth textures working away as well, but everything gets a bit lost in the sheer sonic density and the cumulative effect is either hypnotic or deadening depending on your taste. *Lovelock* is a textural piece, with dense clouds of sonic steam drifting dreamily overhead, colliding and reforming in slow-motion - it clocks in at just over 22 minutes but seems much longer. *Further* has the kind of loping 5/4 groove and repeating bluesy bassline that Alice Coltrane et al specialised in in the 1970s, and which has returned to vogue rebranded as 'spiritual jazz'. There are mellow organ and Morricone-style guitar overdubs, clanking percussion, and tinkly minor key piano, and the whole drifts pleasantly by for twenty minutes or so before fading away, though it could just as easily have continued for the same amount of time, or ended fifteen minutes earlier. The Necks occupy a space that's all their own and this record will only enhance their reputation for uncompromising creative fearlessness.

Eddie Myer





Jure Pukl
Broken Circles
 (Whirlwind Recordings)

Slovenian saxist and composer Pukl is thoroughly embedded in the vanguard of young NYC players; he and his wife Melissa Aldana comprising something of a tenor sax power couple on the scene. This latest release features a band of forward-looking coevals in a programme of originals: the unusual guitar/vibes lineup might suggest a chamber jazz feel but the consistent power and sheer unbridled imagination of the astonishing Kweku Sumbry on drums constantly drive the band to greater heights of energy. Both Joel Ross and Charles Altura are capable of delivering dizzying sweeps of 16th notes, as their playing on opening track *Sustained Optimism* demonstrates, and their tones blend together to create an intriguing texture over which Pukl's plaintive, sometimes hoarse-toned sax sketches out twisting melodies that skirt around the harmonic centres in a manner that recalls the idiosyncratic post-bop adventurism of Sam Rivers. *Broken Circles* alternates super-tight written unisons with short blowing interludes over a chattering rhythm from

Sumbry that evokes his African heritage without being in thrall to it. *Separation* has more of a chamber feel, with Matt Brewer stepping forward from his pivotal role as the band's anchor to make a considered solo statement. *Compassion* uses the additional ghostly rattling of Chilean kalimba to introduce a pensive soprano-led ballad. *Triumph Of Society* builds through dazzling guitar and drums tours de force into an almost symphonic conclusion. Pukl switches to dark-toned bass clarinet for a reading of morbid classic *Gloomy Sunday* that provides an album highlight, building from darkness into light. Brewer comes to the fore again for the bustling *Half Past Five*, a classic slice of straight-eights odd-meter contemporary jazz; *Kids* opens with some candid audio of a child's sax lesson as a refreshing corrective to the high-intensity virtuosity and develops into a lovely limpid ballad, and *Sky Is The Limit* ends on a similarly accessible, uplifting note. Pukl uses his impressive resources as a composer to create music that displays the full range of his band's impressive talents, but there is also a sense of development, striving towards a unified vision where composition, improvisation and texture all combine to produce a highly individual and accessible sound that's more than the sum of its impressive parts.

Eddie Myer



Harish Raghavan
Calls For Action
 (Whirlwind WR 4749)

This is Harish Raghavan's debut under his own name, but fans of the younger end of the NYC scene, especially as represented by Whirlwind, will already be familiar with his big-toned powerful attack and deep gutty sound, through his work with such luminaries as Walter Smith III and vibes sensation Joel Ross. In fact Ross here repays the favour and joins in, along with his regular altoist Immanuel Wilkins and a band of hip young players from the same scene. They share a common vocabulary that matches Raghavan's very contemporary take on what you might call the avant-mainstream. *Newe* has a tumbling odd-number time feel with a complex melody dancing above the churning rhythmic figures and some wide-open post-bop solos - *Los Angeles* has a hushed yet celebratory feel with traces of gospel in the melody, with the impressive Kweku Sumbry adding dropped funk-up bombs throughout - *Sangeet* showcases the light-toned Immanuel Wilkins in a bright, Jarrett-like dance. There's a lot of music here over the 70 minutes and the pace, energy and complexity keeps at high levels throughout - the

solemn, resonant bass intro to *I'll Go And Come Back* is a delight, and while sadly *The Meters* is a bombastic multiple-time textural exploration rather than a tribute to the *Cissy Strut* crew, the Art Ensemble Of Chicago tribute *Calls For Action* is a stately triumph of deep bass, shimmering vibes and clear-toned sax developing into a dizzyingly virtuosic ensemble. Young gun Micah Thomas excels, but so does everyone really, and the solo interludes for bass are especially satisfying. The sheer amount of musical content can sometimes overwhelm the listener but its worth it.

Eddie Myer



Spanish Harlem Orchestra
The Latin Jazz Project
 (ArtistShare)

The Spanish Harlem Orchestra have been running under the guidance of pianist/leader Oscar Hernandez for seventeen years, accumulating three Grammy awards and too many festival appearances and accolades to list here. The folk roots of their music reach deep into the African

diaspora and its multicultural mingling in the slave colonies of the Caribbean, but the particular iteration they specialise in has a distinctly American accent, growing out of the Latino community in New York as it developed from the pre-war Rumba craze through the modernistic Afro-Cuban big bands of visionaries like Machito, and into the fusion of Caribbean styles with modern jazz that blossomed in the 1970s with the additional input of the Puerto Rican community Spanish Harlem, into the hybrid style known as Salsa. Spanish Harlem Orchestra are working firmly in the tradition of the great 70s labels like Fania and epitomise the enduring strengths of the music: tight, intricate arrangements, with modernistic chord colourings from the super-tight, lushly textured horns over beds of immaculately grooving percussion, thumping bass tumbaos, breathtaking audacious arrangements full of perfectly executed breaks and hits, and flamboyant soloing. There's an all-star cast of top NYC jazz talent on hand here to spice up the salsa: Bob Mintzer and Tom Harrell provide some top-notch NYC chops, Kurt Elling contributes a somewhat incongruously nocturnal *Invitation*, Bob Franceschini adds a touch of the unpredictably outside, Dave Liebman adds his unmistakably big-toned, adventurously melodic soprano, but the overall standard of playing is so high that it's impossible to single anyone out. Pure salsa delight of the highest quality.

Eddie Myer



Emma-Jean Thackray
Rain Dance
(Movementt – MVMTT01)

Super-hip London based multi-instrumentalist Emma-Jean Thackray follows up her *Ley Lines* EP and enriches her resumé of eclectic jazz-plus projects still further with this latest offering. *Rain Dance* has a Silent Way era Miles feel to its shifting thirds chords on Fender Rhodes, but there's a harder, contemporary Ldn club edge to the rhythm and the fashionable brass bass sound to bring us firmly into 2020. Vels Trio sticksman Dougal Taylor excels himself at the kit, bringing some real excitement to proceedings as Thackray blows jazzy squiggles over the groove and Elliot Galvin enriches with squelchy synth textures. *Movementt*'s compelling club groove sounds very like the jazzy hipster house of St Germaine and will fit seamlessly into the playlist in coffeeshops and branches of Urban Outfitters across the nation. *Open* has spoken word contributions from Thackray herself, crooning vocal choruses and a woozily wonky beat, like a mix of contemporary R&B and beat poetry. It's super-urban, up to the minute, confidently evocative of late-night urban life, and showcases

Thackray's strong trumpet playing nicely, though there's the feeling that these sketches only represent a partial view of her abilities.

Eddie Myer



Will Vinson
four forty one
(Whirlwind WR4752)

Will Vinson is celebrating his twentieth year in NYC since relocating from his native London, and a glance through the credits on this landmark album give a good indication of his status among the city's A-list of jazz players. This record was conceived as a tribute to some of Vinson's formative influences, but also as a very good excuse to assemble a dream team of five of Vinson's favourite ever pianists to explore different sides of his musical personality. So we have Sullivan Fortner, favourite keysman for the late lamented Roy Hargrove, on some artfully deconstructed versions of the classic standards-to-bop repertoire (Heyman/Young's *Love Letters*, John Lewis' *Milestones*) - culture-crossing time-shifting

virtuoso Tigran Hamasyan on the terrific Vinson original *Banal Street* and Keith Jarrett's mournful *Oasis*, and young gunslinger and Charles Lloyd associate Gerald Clayton on the meditative low-slung groove of *Cherry Time*. There's still space for master composer Fred Hersch to lend his utterly original harmonic imagination to *Monk's Work*, while Vinson's longtime collaborator Gonzalo Rubalcaba lends his powerful attack and pinpoint rhythmic accuracy to a pair of Vinson originals. As if this wasn't enough, the rhythm teams are consistently outstanding throughout, and perfectly matched to their respective pianists: Brewer and Calvairé's work on *Love Letters* is a particular delight, and it's great to hear much-loved veteran Billy Hart in such unaccustomed surroundings. While the Rubalcaba band may seem to wear the laurels in terms of current profile, it's really impossible to pick a front-runner; the less well-known teams all hold their own in terms of originality, ability and conviction. Vinson's bitter-sweet, unsentimental alto is the common thread that ties everything together. Outstanding.

Eddie Myer





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SJM

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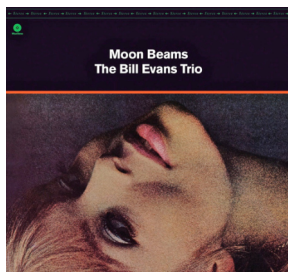


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Pete Recommends...



Bill Evans Trio
Moon Beams

Because we are all having to cope with the stress of this dreadful time, I have decided to offer some help with my latest recommendation. This quiet, relaxed and sensitive album should soothe the nerves. Please do not treat it as background music; give it your full attention and you will enjoy the benefit.

With his great trio recordings in company with Scott la Faro and Paul Motian, Bill became recognised as an outstanding jazz pianist. He remains a major influence on jazz piano players even today. That period in his career came to a tragic end when Scott was killed in a car accident. For six months he did not work at all. Then he invited Chuck Israels to join him and began to accept engagements.

After six months he felt ready to record again. Enough material was created for two albums. It was decided to include the faster tempos in an album entitled *How My Heart Sings*. The slower, mainly ballad, recordings were collected in this album, *Moonbeams*. The result is a very

special collection with an intense but relaxed feeling, which is maintained throughout. For me the track which sets the mood is a beautiful version of Tadd Dameron's ballad *If You Could See Me Now*, but I am sure readers will find their own favourites. In such a context Paul Motian has to find his role with discretion, but he confirms once again his claim to be one of the finest trio drummers. Chuck Israels is a remarkable bass player. You may find some of his lines surprising, but he is certainly very confident in his contribution to every track.

[Moonbeams was originally issued on Riverside LP 428 in 1962. It is easy to find on YouTube.]

Peter Batten

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