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O'pening Thoughts

As the economy has reopened around the US, some states were ready and others were premature leading to more infections and deaths in favor of economics, politics and sometimes, ignorance. The pandemic is continuing to wreak havoc on people everywhere. While some nations (Germany) have arrested the rapid spread and hastened their careful re-engagement, others (USA, Brazil) have sunken deeper into the abyss. To be fair, there has been some progress where states have taken tough but necessary steps, NY, CT, RI, MA, NJ... For sure, our lives and culture have changed and transformation is upon us in many ways. Thankfully there are signs of vaccines coming from several places if you can afford it!

Leadership has been a focal point during this crisis, absent nationally and in some localities while there are some beacons of hope scattered around. The inconsistency is leading to a disparate healthcare situation, accelerated demise of the poor and elderly and a dissolution of the fabric of our democracy

O's Place Jazz Newsletter

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---> Sound advice at a nice price!

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Opening Thoughts cont.

as a wedge is implanted between factions of our population. Many artists recognize, detest and speak out courageously on the matter. Among the best statements are Virginia Schenck's Battle Cry, Arturo O'Farrill's Four Questions, and A Love Letter To Lena by Clairdee. Our Venue Review from saxophonist Scott Robinson is a reflective Shelter-In Place clip that has meaning!

But that's more politics than we care to discuss. (My editor told me I went overboard!) We've all been pushed to find new ways to enjoy our favorite music as most live venues are severely restricted. Those who've gone virtual are a mixed bag. One virtual experience we discovered is QwestTV, Quincy Jones' streaming service of live concerts (page 31). This is good entertainment value for sure.

This issue is packed with over 110 new reviews. Fifty received "Buy" scores and five had "Strong Buy" ratings. We covered the entire Jazz Ruler™ but there are more straight ahead reviews in this issue. Some of the best are Brian Culbertson XX (Smooth - 93), Brian Andres Mayan Suite (Latin - 89), Jeff Hamilton Catch Me If You Can (Modern - 89), Diane Schuur

Running On Faith (Vocals - 84), and Dave Stryker Blue Soul (with the WDR Big Band - 84)

This quarter's Book Review is **Rhythmic Synchronicity** by Dafnis Prieto (85) is a series of synchopated rhythm exercises for groups. It can be fun and challenging as well. Prieto is also a part of the Pacific Mambo Orchestra The III Side (Big Band - 88)

We're excited about our future amidst all of the angst. These changes are bringing us new ways to think and a world of new opportunities.

Please share your thoughts, complaints and any ideas with us. Enjoy the music, and stay safe!

O

Unbiased Sound Advice from O's Place Jazz

ARTIST Title <i>Label Perf/Sound</i>	Top Traditional Picks O's Notes
DERRICK SHEZBIE T^D <u>The Ghost of</u> <u>Buddy Bolden</u> <i>Clubhouse</i> 82	<p>Trumpeter Derrick Shezbie pays homage to Buddy Bolden, a key figure in the development of ragtime and New Orleans jazz. Shezbie recreates that sound on <u>The Ghost of Buddy Bolden</u> revisiting the early 20th century swing in grand style. Derrick and his NOLA-based band combine the cadence of the church with the rhythm of the blues and the feeling of New Orleans a.k.a. Buddy Bolden to arrive at this energetic tribute that brings yesterday forward.</p>
GORDON GRDINA 79 <u>Resist</u> <i>Songlines</i> T^B	<p>Grdina takes us on a symphonic journey with his latest endeavor <u>Resist</u>, or that seems to be the case with the chamber orchestra on the lengthy (23+ minutes) opening title track. Then the mood shifts to a more vibrant exchange led by Gordon and Jon Irabagon (sax) on “Varscona”. Next up is the eerie, mysterious “Resist The Middle” before they wrap up with “Ever Onward” with Grdina playing the Oud. Gordon takes us through multiple genres within each selection showing his creativity and depth with this original music.</p>
TROY ROBERTS <u>Stuff I Heard</u> 78 <i>Toy Robot</i> T^B	<p>New York based, Australian jazz saxophonist Troy Roberts releases his twelfth album as a leader, <u>Stuff I Heard</u>. He’s played with a who’s who in jazz across both straight-ahead and contemporary genres. This could be easily classified as Modern jazz but his beats are so funky, we almost pushed him into a contemporary classification. Roberts composed, arranged and produced the entire album. He also plays the bass with Jimmy McBride on drums. They swing hard on “Harry Brown” and then get funky on “Rejekt” followed by the cool “Hightail” tempered by the relaxed sax on “Aeonian” leaded to a satisfying session.</p>
THE LOST MELODY T^B <u>Now Songs For</u> <u>Old Souls</u> 76 <i>The Lost Melody</i>	<p>The Lost Melody is a trio consisting of pianist Joe Davidian, bassist Dr. Jamie Ousley and drummer Austin McMahon. They have performed as a trio under their individual names over the past two decades but now perform as a band of equals on <u>New Songs For Old Souls</u>. The new, original tunes have catchy melodies and the quiet confidence of experience. Among the best are “Leaving Monserrat”, “Sol”, “Before I Forget” (recorded live) and the relaxed “Ready or Not”. The music swings and is easy to embrace for enjoyable listening.</p>
MARSHA BARTENETTI T^b <u>I Believe In Love</u> <i>Disk Eyes</i> 74	<p>Marsha puts her soft, warm vocals on a collection of eleven classic standards. She works in concert with a strong team including keyboardist Stephan Oberhoff. We enjoyed “Throw It Away” with Kevin Mandill (p), Brian Allen (d), Pat Bergson (g) and Marcus Finnie (d). Other highlights are “Alfie”, “Nature Boy” and “God Bless The Child” featuring saxophonist John Goforth shadowing Bartenetti.</p>

O's Place Features

3D JAZZ TRIO *I Love To See You Smile*

The 3D Jazz Trio is a subset of the Diva Jazz Orchestra featuring pianist Jackie Warren with bassist Amy Shook and Sherrie Maricle on drums. There's a little bit of ragtime on the opener, "I'd Love to See You Smile", and the first of eight fresh covers. They take it down a notch on "Moonglow" drawing us into their space. We also enjoyed the vibrant version of "Besame Mucho", the boogie-woogie groove of "Back at the Chicken Shack" and the deliberate take of "Angel Eyes".

80
Bebop
Diva Jazz
2020



Photo: 3D Jazz Trio

Tropos

Tropos is an Avant Garde band that evolved at the New England Conservatory under the direction of Joe Morris. Vocalist Laila Smith mimics the free improved alto saxophonist Raif Sengupta on "Fronk", the opening selection that sets the stage for the free jazz to come. Mario Layne Fabrizio (d, perc), Zachary Lavigne (b) and Philip Golub (p) round out the band. They are inspired by free jazz artists of the 1970s including Anthony Braxton for whom this work is dedicated in honor of his 75th birthday! The synchronized melodies suggest some level of preparation to this free jazz that contains a lot more structure than the random chaos of many improvisational, free jazz jam sessions.

77 Ballads
Biophilia 2020

Axioms 75 AB

JEREMY PELT

The Art of Intimacy, Vol. 1

The Art of Intimacy, Vol 1 is just that, featuring leader and producer Jeremy Pelt in a trio with George Cables on the keys and bassist Peter Washington. Jeremy has pristine tone on his trumpet. That's entirely appropriate for these warm ballads. The absence of a drummer makes things even more intimate as does the chemistry between the musicians. Pelt chooses less traveled but appreciable standards and adds an original to make a strong point for Volume 2.

82
High Note
Ballads
2020



Photo: Kasia Idzkowska

O's Place Features



81
Jonathan Ng
Swing
2020

Jonathan Ng *The Sphynx*

Seattle based violinist and bandleader Jonathan Ng revisits the classic Swing era with The Sphynx. He forms a sextet that is up to the task. They open with the spirited title track, the lone original in a six-track set, setting the stage for five newly arranged, swinging classics. We liked the throwback, mid tempo “Rockhouse” with Chris Dawson tickling the ivory. Ng shines in concert with tenor saxophonist Albert Alva on “Gin Mill Special” and “Embryo”. The only drawback is the duration is slightly less than 23 minutes. They left the garbage in the studio, a good thing!

Azat Bayazitov

Modern 2020
Rainy Days 89

The Doors Are Open

This is Act II for New York-based, Russian saxophonist Azat Bayazitov. He keeps good company with Adam Rogers (g), Boris Kozlov (b), David Kikoski (p) and Samuel Sarkisyan (d). *The Doors Are Open* is a strong session of originals that begs your attention. Azat opens “The Hugh Sky of Kazan”, a warm ballad before turning over the reins to Kozlov. Rogers and Bayazitov play the melodies in unison on many occasions, notably on “Midwest Steam Locomotive” giving the music a jazz-fusion feel. We also enjoyed “Past” and “A Highway To The Dreams”. There is no sophomore slump here with a very strong performance from Bayazitov and company!



84
Big Band
Strikezone
2020

Dave Stryker *Blue Soul*

One of our favorite jazz guitarists is Dave Stryker. He enlists the support of the powerful and prestigious WDR Big Band under the direction of arranger Bob Mintzer. Bob also contributes tenor sax solos on three selections notably “Stan’s Shuffle”. *Blue Soul* extends Dave’s 8-Track series with jazzy arrangements of “What’s Going On”, “When Dove’s Cry” and “Trouble Man”. We also enjoyed “Shadowboxing”, one of a few Stryker originals. The large ensemble is a force of precision, never overwhelming, and injecting all of the right accents.

Photo: Chris Drukker

O's Place Features

Pacific Mambo Orchestra

The III Side

88

BigBand
Pacific Mambo
2002



Photo: Pacific Mambo

The Caribbean, festive beats are plentiful, anchoring a refined big band up front! Lyrics come from Braulio Barrera, Christelle Durandy and Armando Cordoba on 5 of the 9 selections. There are excellent covers, notably fresh arrangements of “Through The Fire”, “A Night in Tunisia” and “Birks Works”. Jon Faddis (t), Dafnis Prieto (d), Alex Britti (g) and Herman Olivera (vocals on the fiery “Omi Ye Ye”) are featured artists in a sea of strong musicians. The Spanish songs have Spanish lyrics and English songs have English lyrics maintaining the integrity of the tunes in an energetic celebration, The III Side.

Omer Avital

New York Paradox

When bassist and composer Omer Avital plays, it's with power, precision and high spirits. New York Paradox is another fine example. His quintet Qantar includes Eden Ladin (p), Asaf Yuria (t-sax, s-sax), Alexander Levin (t-sax) and Ofri Nehemya (d). All of the musicians were born in Israel and now reside in the Bed-

Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, adjacent to Bushwick where you can find Wilson Live, Avital's innovative Brooklyn venue for jam sessions, meeting and recording. Qantar was born there 4 years ago and this is their sophomore release. The program was recorded live without editing to create a Mediterranean tinged, hard bop that is powerful. It ranges from the fierce opener “Shabazi” to the relaxed “It's All Good”. Indeed it is!



80
2020
Zamzama
Modern

Photo: Omer Avital

ARTIST Title <i>Label Perf/Sound</i>	<u>Big Band Picks</u> O's Notes
JC HOPKINS T^N <u>New York</u> <u>Moment</u> <i>Twee Jazz</i> 81	<p>JC Hopkins is a pianist and bandleader who assembles a strong team of musicians and vocalists for this <u>New York Moment</u>. The featured vocalists are Joy Hanson, Nico Sarbanes, Vanisha-Arleen Gould, Shawn Whitehorn and Alicante Yaffee. We truly enjoyed “The Wonderful Things to Come” and “What Would You Say?” featuring Hanson and Hanson/Sarbanes respectively. There are also great blues on “The Children Will Lead Us” featuring Yaffee. This is a pleasant session as Hopkins coaxes the best from his team.</p>
DOUG T^N MACDONALD <u>Live at Hangar</u> 18 <i>dMac</i> 81	<p>Guitarist Doug MacDonald gathers ten fine west coast-based musicians including saxophonist Rickey Woodard and vibraphonist Charlie Shoemake. There are excellent arrangements of tunes like “Body And Soul”, “Tune Up” and “Maiden Voyage”. This large ensemble is easy to appreciate because there’s no race to see who can play the loudest or any over-assertion of simultaneous, full power of the band. Hats off to McDonnell for mature modulation! Jazz Marathon is indeed an enduring engagement with sixteen well-developed songs over two discs. It was recorded <u>Live at (Marriott’s) Hangar 18</u> restaurant at LAX, a fitting location for this west coast, cool jazz.</p>
SCHAPIRO 17 <u>New Shoes: Kind</u> <u>of Blue at 60</u> T^N <i>Summit</i> 78	<p>Jon Schapiro celebrates perhaps the greatest Miles album with <u>New Shoes: Kind of Blue at 60</u>. Yes it’s been 60 years since the release of the landmark album! Jon’s large ensemble addresses the original music with a twist beyond the big band arrangements. He surrounds the Davis compositions with six chapters of “Boiled Funk” composed by Schapiro (mostly) and Roberta Piket (p). No doubt, <u>Kind of Blue</u> runs differently with this new foot-ware but the classic pieces are still vibrant, even with transformational arrangements. It took a while for us to enjoy the Boiled Funk but the core chapters 2-4 captured our attention, “Dark of Night”, “Whorth Your While” featuring Andy Gavish (t) and “Old Feet, New Shoes”.</p>
FUNK SHUI <u>Shark Nato On A</u> <u>Plane</u> 72 <i>Zoho</i> T^N	<p>This is a large ensemble focused on the music emanating from New York City, a wide range of jazz genres including funk, swing, big band, and popular, contemporary jazz. They add a taste of Miles Davis on “Blue Jay Way” featuring Chris Anderson (t) and get a little funky on “What Barney” including solos from Stan Killian (t-sax) and Seneca Black (t). They follow that with a swinging version of “Summertime” featuring solos from Anderson (t) and John Isley (t-sax). The final track includes an exchange between trombonists Rob Susman and Rex Benincasa that is true to the title, “Everything I Do Gonna Be Funky”. Bandleaders Dave Morgan (b-sax, fl) and Rob Susman keep the spirit and energy level high!</p>

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Traditional Selections


ARTIST	Title	Label	X	T
JACKIE ALLEN	<u>A Romantic Evening with Jackie A</u>	<i>Avant Bass</i>	76	T ^b
JASON MARSALIS	<u>Live</u>	<i>Basin Street</i>	76	T ^B
DANA SANDLER	<u>I Never Saw Another Butterfly</u>	<i>Mouthpiece</i>	75	T ^b
MARK HARVEY	<u>A Rite For All Souls</u>	<i>American Musicworks</i>	74	T ^A
COACHELLA VALLEY TRIO	<u>Mid Century Modern</u>	<i>dMac Music</i>	73	T ^S
LAFAYETTE GILCHRIST	<u>Dark Matter</u>	<i>Hyena</i>	73	T ^C
LYNN CARDONA	<u>Ophelia</u>	<i>Lynn Cardona</i>	73	T ^b
RUDRESH MAHANTHAPPA	<u>Hero Trio</u>	<i>Red Giant</i>	72	T ^B
CATHY SEGAL-GARCIA	<u>Straight Ahead To The U.K.</u>	<i>Dash Hoffman</i>	72	T ^N
AL GOLD	<u>Paradise</u>	<i>Goldsongs</i>	71	T ^b
DAYNA STEPHENS	<u>Liberty</u>	<i>Contagious</i>	71	T ^b
LASZLO GARDONY	<u>La Marseillaise</u>	<i>Sunnyside</i>	69	T ^C
TAMUZ NISSIM	<u>Capturing Clouds</u>	<i>Street Stars</i>	67	T ^b
MICHELE ROSEWOMAN	<u>Hallowed</u>	<i>Advance Dance</i>	67	T ^L
JOAN WATSON-JONES	<u>Choices</u>	<i>Watson-Jones</i>	67	T ^b
NICK FRASER	<u>Zoning</u>	<i>Ontario Arts Council</i>	66	T ^A
DENMAN MARONEY	<u>Martingale</u>	<i>Denman Maroney</i>	66	T ^B
CHRISTOPHE ROCHER	<u>New Origin</u>	<i>Not Two</i>	62	T ^A
CORY SMYTHE	<u>Accelerate Every Voice</u>	<i>Pyroclastic</i>	59	T ^b
SUZANNA ROSS	<u>is Bewitched</u>	<i>Suzanna Ross</i>	58	T ^b

O's Rating System

O's Place has evolved with our listeners to create a rating system based on three factors: Performance, Sound Quality, and the quality of the Package (including liner notes). The primary criteria is Performance followed by Sound and finally Package.

The ratings (X) have the following weightings and will provide a score from 0-100 with average reviews in the 70 range. Our new ratings are similar to traditional academic ratings.

Performance: 15x, Sound: 5x, Package: 1x

0	65	80	95
			
Pass	Contemplate	Buy	Strong Buy

O's Venue Review

Jazz Venue: Shelter In Place: "8 min. 46 sec."

Location: The home studio of **Scott Robinson**

O says: We present you with a letter from Scott and suggest to click on the **link!**

Hello everybody,

I truly miss sharing music with all my wonderful friends, fans and colleagues. These are difficult days, in so many ways. As a result, I have been making and posting some videos. I hope that if you can find a quiet moment, you will check out my most recent one. It has been posted on youtube (<https://youtu.be/OnJfMd9bzdE>) and on facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ScienSonic/>), as well as in the Sound-of-the-Month Club for Laboratory Members.

This is a new kind of statement for me... a type of thing I have never done before, physically or artistically. I hope you can give it your attention, also my accompanying text (pasted below). Before I go, I would like to share one little story for your consideration:

Sometime in the late 1990s, I got caught trying to pay my electric bill with a counterfeit \$100 note. The man at the counter thought it looked suspicious, so he made a few calls and checked some numbers against a database. "I thought so," he said, and then proceeded to deface the bill, mark it counterfeit, and fill out a report. I just stood there in shock until he was finished, whereupon he handed me a copy of the report and said, "I'm sorry, but you lose \$100 today"... and then I was free to walk out and go home. It was never assumed that I was guilty of any crime, or even knew the bill was a fake (I had absolutely no idea, of course). Nobody called the police that day, nobody arrested me or pushed my face into the road. Nobody killed me.

And that was a hundred dollar bill, not just a twenty.

Just something to consider.

Please stay well everybody,

Scott

O's Latin Features

Gonzalo Rubalcaba

Viento Y Tiempo

81
2020
Top Stop
Latin



Cuban pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba collaborates with his childhood friend, vocalist Aymée Nuviola performing their native music on Viento Y Tiempo. The set was captured live at the Tokyo Blue Note. Aymée gets the audience participating on “El Güararey de Pastora” and then comes together with the band exciting the crowd on “El Maniaero”. We also enjoyed “Bemba Colorá” and the racy title track. The music is vibrant yet refined for an enjoyable experience.

Trio de Janeiro

75 Latin 2020
Trio de Janeiro

Close Your Eyes

Trio de Janeiro is a Latin jazz ensemble featuring flutist/pianist Lori Bell, percussionist Tommy Amos and vocalist/guitarist Ron Satterfield. They coalesce around the music of James Taylor on Close Your Eyes. Ron’s arrangements are fresh and bouncy with a folksy, pop feel. The nine songs come together nicely for an entertaining set that grows on you.

Otmaro Ruiz & Bruno Mangueira

Venezuelan pianist Otmaro Ruiz teams up with Brazilian guitarist Bruno Mangueira for Essencia. We enjoyed the simple Latin rhythms of guitar and piano on “Samba Pro Toninho”, “And Then She Smiles” and “Acordando”. Those rhythms are delightfully fresh and playful leading towards a rich, jovial session that blends traditional warm Latin American music with jazz.



2020
Blue Canoe
Latin 79

Essencia



Photo: Otmaro Ruiz

Photo: David Lyell

O's Piano Features

The Many Open Minds of Roger Kellaway

Roger Kellaway is always a joyful listen. He's got that bouncy swinging style that always gets your head bobbing, feet patting and puts a smile on your face. Bruce Forman does excellent work on guitar on "Doxy" while bassist Dan Lutz shines with a solo on "Take The A Train". Roger exercises his fingers to delight the audience on "Caravan". and "Take Five" making us wonder if he'll ever slow down! These seven generous selections are excellent examples of The Many Open Minds of Roger Kellaway.

Photo: Jorjana Kellaway

86
Swing
2019
IPO



O's primary listening is done with a Sony XA777 ESSACD player, Ayre C5-xe^{MP} CD player, Jeff Rowland Consonance preamp, two Jeff Rowland Model 1 amplifiers (balanced mono mode), Classe CA-200 amplifier, Mirage M1 speakers and B&W 800D speakers wired with Cardas Hex 5C speaker wire, Transparent Audio interconnects, Pro-ject Debut turntable with Sumilo Blue Point No. 2 Cartridge and E.S.P. Essence Reference Power Distribution System.

81
ECM
Fusion
2020

Carla Bley Trio

The trio is bassist Steve Swallow, Andy Sheppard

on tenor sax and leader, pianist Carla Bley. They combine for a gentle and very soothing session that is like a lullaby! It is a collection of warm, sometimes blue ballads that speak volumes. There are three suites: "Life Goes On: Parts I-IV", "Beautiful Telephones: I-III" and "Copycat I-III". While each of the musicians are featured, Sheppard does a fine job with warm melodies on each passage! Bley at 81 remains vibrant and easy to embrace.

Life Goes On

Photo: Carla Bley

O's Piano Features

Arturo O'Farrill

Four Questions

Pianist, conductor and composer Arturo O'Farrill is inspired and shares a beautiful message with a Latin symphony performing a beautiful collection of Afro Cuban beats. And it is also a history lesson with reflections on the words of WEB Dubois as narrated by Dr. Cornell West. "Four Questions" was premiered at The Apollo May 21, 2016 and they are even more relevant today as we face an unprecedented challenge in National leadership. The vibrant music is rich and full of inspiration. Though it's a full orchestra the sound is not cluttered. It is crystal clear, as clear as the message given in the Four Questions. As we witnessed the early release from jail of Michael Cohen while countless others remained in infected cells, we need this reminder to take heed to what's right. Listen to the music and VOTE!



O's Place Jazz Ruller™

Traditional

Contemporary

1900

1920

1940

1960

1970

1980

2000

Ragtime T^R
Dixie T^D

Blues&Ballads T^b
Swing T^S

Bebop T^B
Big Band T^N

Latin T^L
Free T^A

Fusion C^F
R&B+Jazz C^R

Funk C^f
Pop+Jazz C^P

Acid C^A



Connie Han

Iron Starlet

77

Mack Ave.
Modern
2020

We are enjoying the blossoming of 24-year-old, LA-based pianist and composer Connie Han. She has strong accompaniment with Jeremy Pelt (t), Walter Smith III (t-sax) and Ivan Taylor (b). Producer, drummer Bill Wysaske also contributes three originals to the mix. Connie shows her maturity with a warm approach across the keys on "Captains Song". Pelt shines on "Dark Chambers" and teams with Smith to make "Nova" shine while Wysaske adds a strong solo on "For The O. G." Don't be fooled by the cover, Iron Starlet is a strong fresh set of straight-ahead jazz!

O's Piano Features

Sam Hirsh

Quite Frankly

2020
Modern
Umadas
78

Pianist, composer and producer Sam Hirsch assembles a trio with bassist John Webber and Kevin Kanner on drums. He opens with the title track rolling along with a steady bubbly groove. That's followed by a peaceful "Look For A Silver Lining". Saxophonist Ralph Moore jazzes things up on four tracks, notably "Pop's Delight" and "Ways of the Wise" including a walking bass solo by Webber. All together Quite Frankly is enjoyable entertainment! This is Sam's debut as a leader and we're certain he'll be back to a welcoming audience!

Photo: Sam Hirsh

Alan Rosenthal

Ballads 2019
74 Alan Rosenthal

Elbow Grease

Pianist and composer Alan Rosenthal leads a trio with bassist Brian Glassman and drummer Mike Campana for five of the nine selections. He also goes solo, plays in a quartet and a septet. We liked the pervasive, gentle swing that connected the entire set. Highlights are "Drop Me Here", "They Didn't Believe Me", "Old-Fashioned Valentine" and "Monk Over Marrakesh".

Brad Mehldau

Suite: April 2020

Suite: April 2020 is Brad's latest solo effort and it is, in many parts, a reflection of the times. Brad composed this music at his home in The Netherlands, sheltering in place during the pandemic. Sometimes when we have stress, confusion and concerns, we look to music for solace, a way to escape and reflect. Mehldau provides an answer with twelve fresh originals and three complimentary covers notably "New York State of Mind" as he longs for his native home in America. Relevant and noteworthy.

91
Nonesuch
Ballads
2002



Photo: Brad Mehldau

O's Piano Features

John DiMartino

Passion Flower

79
Modern
Sunnyside
2020

John Di Martino leads a swinging modern jazz set from his seat at the piano on *Passion Flower*, a celebration of the music of Billy Strayhorn. The warm, romantic rendition of “Lush Life” features rich vocals by Raul Midón. There are also some instrumental ballads like “Star Crossed Lovers”. In fact there are more ballads than burners. We enjoyed the heat of “Take the A Train” with a cool bass solo from Boris Kozlov, “Rain Check” featuring drummer Lewis Nash, and “Johnny Come Lately”. Eric Alexander (sax) provides warm, resounding support on all fronts embellishing Di Martino’s arrangements to the fullest.



Photo: John Di Martino.

Mike Bond

74

Bounce Castle
Bebop 2019

The Honorable Ones

Pianist and composer Mike Bond his debut recording as a leader, *The* and Ben Wolfe (b) lead a fine team dreams. We enjoyed the tranquility of “Railroad” and the warmer selections like “Verus Vita” and “It’s A Long Way Back” as well as the spirited “Chase The Wind”. Guest vocalist Claudia Acuña appears on two selections notably the delicate “More I See You”. Gene Shinozaki (beatbox vocals) performs on three songs notably the title track. We have ample reasons to look for more from Bond!

sprinkles some first call talent into *Honorable Ones*. Steve Wilson (sax) of musicians that help Mike realize his dreams. We enjoyed the tranquility of “Railroad” and the warmer selections like “Verus Vita” and “It’s A Long Way Back” as well as the spirited “Chase The Wind”. Guest vocalist Claudia Acuña appears on two selections notably the delicate “More I See You”. Gene Shinozaki (beatbox vocals) performs on three songs notably the title track. We have ample reasons to look for more from Bond!

Bob Baldwin

Henna

79

2020

New Urban Jazz
Pop+Jazz

Jazz keyboardist Bob Baldwin has a penchant for creating good carnage with his contemporary jazz. *Henna* is his 31st recording, defined as a tropical shrub, used here as a reference to organic and natural feelings, a laid back collection

that is perfect for the after-work-wind-down including a few selections to help you catch your second wind like “A Brazilian Love Affair”. Lori Williams adds vocals on “No Longer Lost” and “Club Life” a super 10+ min jam featuring solos from Marcus Anderson (talk box), Marion Meadows (sax), Tom Brown (t), Walter Beasley (sax), Nils (g) and several others! Baldwin dedicates *Henna* to George Duke and Joe Sample, two of his idols.



Photo: Bob Baldwin

O's Piano Features

Monika Herzig

Eternal Dance

2020
Modern
Savant
80

Pianist, composer and co-producer Monika Herzig reassembles her Sheroes band for their third release Eternal Dance, their first on Savant. The sorority is beyond proving equivalencies and is excelling regardless of gender. Guitarist Leni Stern makes her presence known on several tracks notably “Eternal Dance” and “Rabbit”. We also enjoyed “Fly High” featuring Lakecia Benjamin (a-sax), “We Can Be (S)Hereos”, the soothing “Fall in Reading” and solemn finale “Memories of Petra”.

Photo: Monika Herzig



Jan Hammer

71
Red Gate
Modern
2020

Sketches In Jazz

Jan Hammer is a Czech-American keyboardist, composer and producer. He's performed all types of music most notable the theme for the TV Series Miami Vice. This time out, Hammer straddles contemporary and traditional sides of jazz while playing all of the instruments. They open with the deeply introspective “Deep Pool”, a strong hint of the mood makers to follow. Sketches In Jazz is in fact an assemblage of musical illustrations that set the stage for thoughts and words. “Mood 2”, “Later On”, and “My Father’s Vibe” will all spark memories of events and experiences. The set is not lengthy but it is meaningful.

Fred Hersch

2018
Palmetto
Modern
94

Live in Europe

Live In Europe was re-released as a part of a set The Fred Hersch Trio: 10 Years/6 Discs in 2019. Originally released in 2018, we pulled out our original Europe disc and enjoyed it once again, as much as the live audience in Brussels, November 24, 2017! Eric McPherson (d) and John Hébert (b) join Hersch (p) for this set that includes 6 originals and 4 covers. There are soft ballads like “Bristol Fog”, “Newklypso” for Sonny Rollins, and upbeat burners like “Black Nile” with a resounding opening drum solo! There is magic in the spontaneity of a live recording and the Trio was in rare form!

Photo: John Abbott



O's Sax Features

Jim Snidero

Project K

Saxophonist Jim Snidero accentuates his quintet with the addition of Do Yeon Kim playing the gayageum, a Korean stringed instrument. He gives the entire session a taste of the orient starting with “Han”. There is some rather creative piano work (inside the box) to open DMZ” before the Snidero and Dave Douglas (t) get tangled up in a fierce exchange. Bassist Linda May Han Oh steps up with a solo on “Jeju” along with pianist Orrin Evans. Meanwhile Rudy Royston (d) keeps the pace with accents in all the right spots. We also enjoyed the jovial swing and groove of “Jenga” making Project K an exhilarating, Korean tinged jazz experience.

83
Modern
Savant
2020

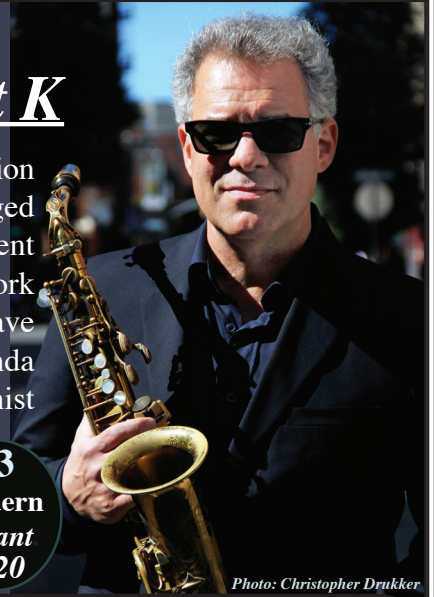


Photo: Christopher Drukker

Oded Tzur

Ballads 2020
ECM 79

Here Be Dragons

Tenor saxophonist and composer Oded Tzur leads a quartet with Nitai HersHKovits (p), Petros Klampanis (b) and Jonathan Blake (d) for Here Be Dragons, his latest release. The dragons are rather peaceful here as the program is mostly the relaxed ballads including three solo expressions: “Miniature 1, 2 and 3” from HersHKovits, Klampanis and Tzur respectively. However the pace accelerates and the spirit livens on “The Dream” before they close with a warm cover of “Can’t Help Falling In Love”.

Dr. Michael White

Live

Clarinetist Dr. Michael White takes us on a retro experience to the early 20th century. The music has an energetic, Dixie swing and New Orleans groove. We really enjoyed the sultry take of “Summertime”, one of five gems giving us a peak of yesteryear. It’s vinyl-length, 39 minutes! They wrap the set with the truly appropriate “Give It Up Gypsy Second Line” and truly enjoy it.

77
New Orleans
Basin St.
2020



Photo: Wikimedia

O's Sax Features

Jimmy Greene

While Looking Up

82
Modern
Mack Ave.
2020

There's lots of space on this recording, open space that allows for the blossoming of the tones of the instruments, particularly on tunes like "No Words" where Jimmy's tenor sax is embellished. Greene (s-sax, t-sax, fl, cl, b-cl) assembles a strong team here with Aaron Goldberg (p), Reuben Rogers (b), Kendrick Scott (d) and Lage Lund (g) with guest Stefon Harris (vibes, marimba) on two selections notably "Always There". Rogers states his case with Greene on "Good Morning Heartache" as does Lund on "Overreaction". The best tunes are the warm ballads like "Steadfast" making While Looking Up a winning combination.



Photo: Jimmy Katz

David Bixler

79 rpr
Ballads 2020

Blended Lineage

Alto saxophonist and composer David Bixler combines his quintet (Bixtet) with a string quartet for Blended Lineage, a four-part introspective suite that speaks of tribes through instrumentation. Tribalism could be troubling in today's environment but Bixler takes an optimistic approach. We liked the two middle tracks, "Motherland" without strings, and "Trenches" where the blending of the nine musicians is rich and engaging. Our favorite is the finale "My Soul Swoons Slowly" with the strings bathing Bixler's warm melody.



Photo: Dave Glasser

76
Fusion
Here 'Tiz
2020

Dave Glasser

Hypocrisy Democracy

Saxophonist Dave Glasser assembles a world-class quartet with pianist Andy Milne, bassist Ben Allison and Matt Wilson on drums. Hypocrisy Democracy is meant as an inspirational statement to stimulate discussions that lead to more transparency and a harmonious existence for all of us. We certainly could appreciate that today. We liked the interplay between Allison and Glasser on "Coffee, Dogs, and Telelogs", the cool vibe of "It's Nothing New", "Minor Madness, and the cool blues of "Dilemonk". These are all instrumentals spanning a range of emotion that helped take our mind away from the crisis we face, at least for a moment.

O's Drummer Features

Mayan Suite is the debut for drummer Brian Andres' Trio Latino featuring pianist Christian Tumalan and bassist Aaron Germain. They are the rhythm section of his famed, 8-piece Afro-Cuban Jazz Cartel. But Trio Latino has 100% of the energy and vibrancy of the large ensemble! Both Tumalan and Germain contribute originals to the set to go along with five Latin jazz classics. They explode on "Got A Match" and "Morning Sprite", two Corea pieces as well as "Viento Solar". We also enjoyed the ballad "Si Tu Vez", the mid-tempo "Higashi Nakano" and "On Green Dolphin Street" featuring Germain. Trio Latino establishes themselves as a formidable unit on any stage.

Photo: Canopus

Brian Andres

Mayan Suite

2020
Latin 89
Bacalo



Jeff Hamilton

Capri 2020
Modern 89

Catch Me If You Can

The seamless harmony of a band with deep roots is unmistakable and the 30-year life of this trio makes them more than a cohesive unit. Pianist Tamir Hendelman, and bassist Jon Hamar perform with the leader, producer Jeff Hamilton on drums. They mix a few originals with several lesser-known covers for a set with varied tempo and flow that kept us engaged from start to finish! The excellent sound quality (HDCD) makes the performance even more enjoyable.

Paul Shaw

Moment of Clarity



Photo: Paul Shaw

Paul Shaw was a drummer for the Air Force Falconaires Big Band. That gave him a wide exposure to different genres. He has evolved as a composer, educator and bandleader, now based in NYC and presenting his quintet for a Moment of Clarity. There's a taste of racy fusion on "Peekaboo" with nice work from the entire band notably Gary Versace (p), Brad Shepik (g), Drew Gress (b) and Alex Sipiagin (t). We also enjoyed the mysterious vibe on the title track and "Song For Everyone" incorporating elements of chamber jazz to impart a rather calming sensation to this modern jazz set.

O's Vocal Features

Brenda Earle Stokes

Solo Sessions, Volume 1

Canadian vocalist and pianist Brenda Earle Stokes gives us a brand new recording titled Solo Sessions, Volume 1. We think it's the start of something good. She sounds best on the blues tracks like "How Long Has That Evening Train Been Gone" and the soft ballads like "I Can Let Go Now". We also enjoyed "Ladies In Mercedes" and a unique arrangement of "The Power of Love" as Brenda is at peace with herself and in complete harmony with her piano.

76
Ballads
AllSheNeeds
2019



Photo: Erika Kapin

Gloria Reuben & Marty Ashby

For All We Know

For All We Know is a collection of classic, romantic ballads featuring vocalist Gloria Reuben backed by guitarist, arranger Marty Ashby. It is a minimalist; everyday set that is truly heartwarming. This is a duo you'd love to see at the local coffeehouse, bookstore or any venue that has a small ensemble enhancing the mood. The MCG in Pittsburgh would also be ideal! Among the best tunes are "Time After Time", "The People That You Never Get To Love", "How High The Moon" and the title track.

74
Ballads
MCG Jazz
2020

Clairdee

89
Ballads
Declare
2020

A Love Letter To Lena

A Love Letter to Lena is a fine recording focused on the life of Lena Horne, the first African American actress cast in positive roles in Hollywood. She faced animosity from both whites and blacks as she blazed the trail but ultimately endured. Clairdee does a wonderful job singing on songs like "Maybe" and "Something To Live For" with fine accompaniment from violinist Regina Carter. Margo Hall is the narrator, speaking from Lena's voice on the interludes. We particularly appreciated "The Movement" followed by "Stand Up" which is relevant today reminding you to get out and vote in November!



Photo: Clairdee

O's Vocal Features

Calibria Foti

Prelude To A Kiss

Calibria Foti is a singer, composer and violinist who employs a large ensemble for Prelude To A Kiss. It's a romantic work that goes beyond her immediate mate to close friends and those special bonds. Foti's confidence allows her wealth of talents to surface without showboating. Lush strings and lyrics that match the spirit of her mood supplement her. Calabria shares the stage with trombonist, producer Bob McChesney on "The Man With The Horn" and then with guitarist, vocalist John Pizzarelli on "It's The Mood That I'm In". Roger Kellaway (p), Peter Erskine (d), Larry Koonse (g) and Luis Conte (perc) are a few of the excellent team of musicians that combine to make this a winning effort.

82
MoCo
Ballads
2019



Photo: Calibria Foti

Denise Mangiardi

Alice's Loft
2020 Ballads 77

Brown Book

Denise Mangiardi has a storied history in music that includes playing guitar, piano, singing, arranging, recording and arranging across genres and with large ensembles including arranging for string orchestras. She brings it all together on Brown Book with Strings from the Slovak National Symphony Orchestra. She doesn't stop there, also inviting Jerry Bergonzi (t-sax), Mark Soskin (p), Jay Anderson (b), Brian Seeger (g) and Tony Dagradi (s-sax, t-sax) to her party! And it's an enjoyable party of ballads with vocals from Mangiardi. Among the best are "Castle in the Sky", the soft tones of "Waves", "Horn Song" and the blues based romance of "Day Time Kind of Girl".

81
Ballads
Gladitude
2019

Kathleen Hollingsworth

Mad Love

Vocalist, pianist, songwriter and educator Kathleen Hollingsworth moved from Miami to Portland to teach a year or so ago. She brought a swinging East Coast vibe to blend with West Coast cool and that's what we hear on Mad Love as exemplified on "Beneath An Evening Sky". We liked the funky blues of "Easy Rider" featuring Wil Blades (organ) and a cool drum solo from producer Brent Follis. Other highlights are "Candy Man" and the swinging "Whisper Not". If you're anywhere near Portland, find out where Hollingsworth is performing otherwise enjoy the CD!



Photo: Soundcloud.com

O's Vocal Features

We're at a crossroads in the nation, a silent Civil War where our truths have been challenged. Bad guys have been made good, and good guys been vilified to confuse and divide the nation. There's no thought of equality, only selfish justice for a few and a sense of satisfaction for the bigots who feel left behind. Virginia saw this challenge after the election of Trump and the accompanying divisive inequities, regressive politicking and racial divide. Her Battle Cry is an impactful recording with a lot of patriotism including stirring renditions of "America the Beautiful", and the "Pledge of Allegiance" with repurposed arrangements of "Abraham, Martin & John", "Strange Fruit" and "Sack Full of Dreams". It is soulful, inspirational call to us to reflect and become an active part of the solution.

Photo: Virginia Schenck

Virginia Schenck

Battle Cry



98

*Airborne Ecstasy
Ballads 2020*

Brenda Brown

Canadian vocalist Brenda Brown

*Brenda Brown
2020 Ballads 77*

delivers warm, smoky vocals on top of swinging, classic, big band standards. She's backed by a full orchestra along with a guest appearance by guitarist Rag Schwager on "Splintered Dream". Other highlights are "They Can't Take That Away From Me", "If You Know Love" and "The Folks Who Live On The Hill", a duet with Alfie Zappacosta. Life Among Giants is a storybook, debut recording with musical pages from yesteryear! the Sky", the soft tones of "Waves", "Horn Song" and the blues based romance of "Day Time Kind of Girl".

Life Among Giants

Sophie Fatu Love Is...



Photo: Instagram

There's a young child dressed in a tux on the CD cover and yes, she's the headline singer on Love Is... For those of you who watch America's Got Talent, she's recognizable. Now 7 years old, she's got mad skills and will be fun to watch as she matures. In the mean time listen to her debut, backed by an orchestra directed by Rob Wasilauski with Jeff Hamilton (d), Chuck Berghofer (b) and Tom Ranier (p) holding down the rhythm section. But this is Sophie's show and she's giving it her all. She's much more than a cute novelty; she has great pitch and a strong voice. Watch out!

77

*Extraordinary
Ballads 2020*

O's Vocal Features

All I Am Anthony Jefferson

Anthony Jefferson is one of the Crescent City's finest baritone crooners appearing on All I Am with support from pianist, arranger, composer and producer Cory Allen. There is a stirring bolero version of "Besame Mucho" pairing Jefferson with Patricia Pereyra and also unique arrangements of "Willow Weep For Me" and "Summertime" including a warm sax solo from Jesus Abreu. Anthony switches gears to the soul classic "Me and Mrs. Jones" with lush strings before romancing us with "In The Presence Of" shadowed by Mark Rapp on trumpet. Strong liner notes are compromised by small font and poor contrast but the performance easily overcomes that deficit.

Photo: Entertainers Worldwide

81
Ballads
A. Jefferson
2020

Kathleen Grace

LA-based singer, guitarist and and country genres on Tie Me To You state of mind. The recording came together from the heart with no rehearsals or patches, a monumental expression for Grace exemplified by "John The Revelatory", "Embarcadero", "The Thrill Is Gone" and a unique arrangement of "Love For Sale". She had excellent support from co-producer, pianist Larry Goldings with a minimalist approach that draws the listener into the performance.

74
Ballads
Monsoon
2020

Tie Me To You

composer Kathleen Grace touches jazz, pop You. It is a reflection of Kathleen's current



Photo: Tim Courtney

84
Ballads
Jazzheads
2020

Diane Schuur Running On Faith

Diane Schuur has one of the best jazz blues voices: resounding, rich and honey coated. Sure it's changed over time but tonal accuracy and soul remain in tact with unprecedented story-telling ability. Guitarist Thom Rotella is on his A-game with complimentary liquid melodies on "The Danger Zone" while trumpeter Kyle Palmer takes the spotlight on "All Blues". Co-producer Ernie Watts (sax) compliments Schuur throughout the set as she shares the spotlight generously. But this is Schuur's set and she is in classic form notably on "There Is Always One More Time", "Chicken" and "Way Over Yonder".

O's Guitar Features

Photo: Henry Robinett



Henry Robinett

Jazz Standards, Vol. 1

This is a fine collection of standards that are done to perfection helping listeners reminisce, relax and enjoy the music. The recording was made 20 years ago and it sounds fresh today, the sign of well-made standards. Yes, everybody has a standards album but this one cooks! Guitarist and bandleader Henry Robinett is on top of his game as are his counterparts, pianist Joe Gilman, bassist Chris Symer and drummer Michael Stephens. Some of the best are “Invitation”, “The Way You Look Tonight” and “East Of The Sun”.

81
Pop+Jazz
Nefertiti
2020

Lionel Loueke

Loueke has a unique style his body and what emerges. It's another language, resonates with us. The

74
World
2020
Pias

The Journey The Bonuses

that incorporates his guitar, his mind, from his mouth, yet another instrument.

a musical language that Journey The Bonuses is his

latest release, a laid back collection of 9 tracks that are unique, eclectic but approachable if a bit brief (just over 26 minutes total). Lionel states his case and invites you to enjoy his space, a can't miss if he's in your neighborhood or somewhere close.

Photo: Jean-Baptiste Millot



John Stein

Guitarist, composer and educator John Stein is experiencing a Watershed moment as he steps down from teaching at Berklee to focus on performing music! He assembles a quintet with Teco Cardozo (fl, sax), Daniel Grajew (keyboards), Frank Herzberg (b) and Žé Eduardo Nazario (d). The recording was made in Brazil and you can feel the air on “Brazilian Hug”. They don't miss a beat on Joe “Kicker”, one of four covers combined originals and a showcase for the entire. We also enjoyed the romantic ballad “Dreamsville” in a strong set.

78
2020
Fusion
Whaling
City

Watershed

Henderson's with Stein's band.



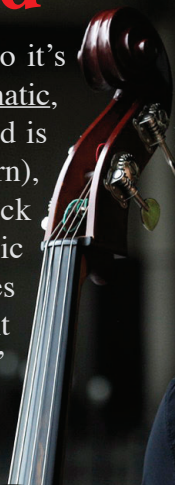
Photo: John Stein

O's Bass/Guitar Features

Kyle Eastwood

Cinematic

Bassist Kyle Eastwood loves movies and so it's fitting for him to satisfy his passion with Cinematic, eleven fresh takes of movie scores. His band is a quintet with Quentin Collins (t, flugelhorn), Brandon Allen (sax), Andrew McCormack (p) and Chris Higginbottom (d). The music is expressive, stimulating, and it facilitates reminiscing some of the flicks. Camille Bertault adds vocals on "Les Moulins De Mon Coeur" as does Hugh Coleman on "Gran Torino". Our favorites are "Charade" and "Pink Panther -Theme" with the sax/trumpet suspense.



71
Jazz Village
Modern
2020

Photo: Kyle Eastwood

Frank Kohl

2019
Frank Kohl
Bebop
79

The Crossing

Guitarist and composer Frank Kohl and bassist Steve LaSpina for a warm,

these musicians takes the lead line and does it justice over nine well-crafted selections, a blend of classics and originals. There's a taste of bossa nova on "O Grande Amour" & "Brigs Nuncas Mais", a touch of romance on "The Goodbye", and racy interplay on "Middle of Nowhere". This set will fall into the hearts of countless guitar lovers and many others as well.

teams up with guitarist John Stowell soothing session, The Crossing. Each of

Rodney Whitaker

All Too Soon

79
Ballads
Origin
2020

All Too Soon is the second of five releases Whitaker planned to commemorate his Golden Jubilee (2019). He channels the energy of his sextet towards the music of Duke Ellington. This is material that he's learned, relearned and practiced, especially during his tenure with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra ('94-'02). Of course the material is great and the fresh arrangements allow the musicians to impart their own character on solo interpretations. Rodney's daughter Rochelle Fortin adds rich vocals notably on "Mood Indigo", "Come Sunday" and "Do Nothing 'Till You Hear From Me". Diego Rivera (sax), Michael Dease (tb), Karriem Riggins (d), Richard Roe (p) and Brian Lynch (t) all play strong roles in a well-coordinated effort.



Photo: Rodney Whitaker

ARTIST Title <i>Label</i> Rating	<u>Top Contemporary Picks</u> O's Notes
DUENDE LIBRE <u>THE DANCE SHE</u> <u>SPOKE</u> C^L <i>Duende Libre</i> 82	<p>Duende Libre is a trio featuring producer Alex Chadsey (keyboards), Farko Dosumov (b) and Jeff “Bongo Busch (d, perc). <u>The Dance She Spoke</u> arrives amidst the global pandemic and it has a soothing effect on the crisis. Frank Anderson (vocals, perc) and Chava Mirel (vocals) broaden the trio’s music, a blend of jazz, R&B and heavily influenced by West African music (Mali, Guinea). The rhythms are contagious and resonate in your body and spirit. Our favorite tracks are “Dansa”, “N’gri” and “Mendiani” packing a 1-2-3 punch in the middle of the set!</p>
PARISALEXA 81 <u>2 REAL</u> <i>Parisalexia</i> C^R	<p>Paris is a confident young black woman with all of the right stuff, just ask her! She also has a fine voice and a great sense of rhythm that gives her an A+ rap game. 2 Real is a combination of hip-hop, rap, and R&B for mature audiences only.</p>
SARAH ELGETI <u>DAWN COMES</u> <u>QUIETLY</u> C^F <i>Gateway</i> 75	<p>We continue to be impressed by the Danish reed master Sarah Elgeti and her band. For her latest recording <u>Dawn Comes Quietly</u>, Elgeti (t-sax, fl, b-cl) leads a quartet with Nils Raae (keys, harmonica), Anders Krough Fjeldsted (b) and Henrik Holst Hansen (d). Nine of eleven selections are originals including “Where to”, a rich vocal featuring Sidsel Storm. Other highlights are “Changing Whispers”, “Crazy Destiny” and “En sommeraften”.</p>
MICHAEL JEFREY STEVENS <u>THE POET IS IN</u> <u>THE HOUSE</u> C^F <i>ARC</i> 75	<p>Asheville, NC is fortunate to have jazz pianist and composer Michael Jeffrey Stevens among the many talented artists who’ve made that rising community vibrant. He’s expanded his ensemble to a 15-piece Mountain Chamber Jazz Ensemble! Katie Cilluffo adds vocals on “What A Dance”, “Sad” and a poetic statement on “Trump (Dire Warning)”. The solos from Christian Howe (violin) and Stevens are also notable in yet another captivating session from Jeffrey Stevens.</p>

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O's Rating Scale (X)

0 65 80 95



Pass

Contemplate

Buy

Strong Buy

O's Place Features

Brian Culbertson

Smooth jazz keyboardist, composer and producer Brian Culbertson serves up a set of funky jazz with some retro infusions that will bring Baby Boomers back into the fold! They open with "Get Up!" featuring Byron Chambers on the talkbox giving us memories of Zapp. Bootsy Collins shows up for "Dance Like This". And he's still popping at 68! Ray Parker, Jr. (g) is featured on "The Hangout" and he shows up on a few other songs as well. Paul Jackson Jr. (g), Alex AI (b), Khari Parker (d, perc), Jubu Smith (g), Lenny Castro (congas, perc) and Ricky Peterson (B3) put the classic funk into it. Avery Sunshine (vocals) softens things with "More Than Thankful" and Noel Goudin breaks up the intensity with a soulful calling on "The Truth". XX is an album providing a retrospective on funk ushered into the 21st century by Culbertson.



XX

93
BCM
funky Jazz
2020

Photo: Daniel Ray

Amendola vs. Blades

Scott Amendola plays drums and

Royal Potato Family
2019 Fusion 74

Everybody Wins

handles the electronics while Wil Blades plays organ, clavinet and other keyboards. Together they paint a picture of the future where Everybody Wins. The band sounds much larger than a duo and in fact there are four special guests who contribute to the depth: Jeff Parker (g), Rob Burger (keyboards+), Skerik (sax) and Cyro Baptista (perc). They have a funky, rock-fusion vibe that's actually quite engaging, jamming on the opener "Hi-Lo". We liked the funky vibe of "Wall Town", the New Orleans vibe of "Fess Up", and the old-school blues on "Hambela".

77
R&B+Jazz
RJ&Assignment
2019

Photos: RJ

RJ & The Assignment

Composer, keyboardist and bandleader Reginald "RJ" Johnson produces solid hip-hop rhythms underscoring a series of romantic ballads featuring vocalists Kiara Brown, Aja Hawkins, Klaiton Johnson and Alisha Webster. The resulting grooves are insatiable, mature and ready for relaxing or jamming. All is peaceful aside from the upbeat "My Mean Ol' Aunt" featuring humorous excerpts from Aunt Ester (Lawanda Page on Sanford and Son) with additional keyboards from Tom Schuman. Other highlights include "Everybody Wants To Rule The World", "Between Now and Never" and the soulful "I'm Tryin".



Hydrid Harmony

O's Place Features

Gary Husband & Markus Reuter

2020
Moonjune
Fusion
79

Music of Our Times

Pianist Gary Husband and guitarist Markus Reuter give us a curious landscape that could serve as the backdrop for a

Photos: Moonjune



mysterious movies or perhaps a horror flick. It has all of the elements to lure you in with peaceful, inviting landscapes that are poised for the big event. But the explosion, the murder, or the big crash never occurs, at least not on this recording. Music of Our Times is more of a discovery series culminated with the final track, "Illuminated Heart".



Shabaka & The Ancestors

76
World
Impulse!
2020

We Are Sent Here By History

Barbadian songwriter, bandleader Shabaka Hutchings (t-sax, cl) chronicles a journey including colonialism and African diaspora. It was released at the dawn of the global pandemic and has immediate relevance. The Ancestors are his band of South African musicians. They describe the pain of history in music and lyrics, suggesting that there must be some suffering before with rebuild and recreate with unity. Shabaka successfully weaves his message into a rootsy, percussion-laden musical landscape that fuels passion and hopefully can motivate positive change.



Photo: Shabaka & The Ancestors

O's Place Features

78
Blue Canoe
Fusion
2020

2 from Jimmy Haslip Nightfall

Nightfall was originally released in 2014, a collaboration with Jimmy's longtime friend, keyboardist/programmer Joe Vanelli. The work was dedicated to Haslip's daughter Gabriela and it was re-released this year on Bandcamp. The music is still fresh and the lineup of musicians is stacked including Bob Mintzer (sax), Wayne Bergeron (t) and Roger Bunn (vibes). Among the best tunes are "Empath", "Casa De Oro" with its cool, Latin vibe, "Palo Alto" and the title track. Lori Perry adds soft vocals on "Deep Waters" a pop ballad, the lone vocal track. Nightfall is an appropriate title for this session as the music is relaxing and well suited for the wind down.

Red Heat

Red Heat is a tribute to bassist Jimmy Haslip's late father (James J.F. Haslip) and his Puerto Rican heritage. It was originally released in 2000 (Unitone) and was rereleased on Bandcamp this year. Haslip was the prominent bassist in the Yellowjackets and he adds pizzazz to many contemporary and Latin jazz artists today. He's leading the charge here with a fiery set tempered by soft synthesized keys and energized with crisp brass. The opener, "Los Feliz" sets the stage with a rich percussive mix and brass. They move to calypso beats on "Calle Del Sol", a groove that feels right like most of these tunes centered on Jimmy's bass.

78
Blue Canoe
Pop+Jazz
2020

Mariea Antoinette All My Strings

74
Massai
Pop+Jazz
2020

Mariea Antoinette brings new flavors to the smooth jazz scene with her harp. Producer, arranger Allan Phillips (d, b, g, keyboards) composed 4 of the 9 selections notably "Ain't Playin'" and "Sekmet: Lioness Goddess". The freshly arranged covers of "Yearning For Your Love", "Loving You" and "That Thing" are also standouts. All My Strings is a pop jazz collection of easy listening classics that will resonate with a lot of the baby boomers.



Photo: Mariea Antoinette

Contemporary Selections

ARTIST	Title	Label	X	T
AFEL BOCOUM	<u>Lindé</u>	<i>World Circuit</i>	76	C ^P
J&B KINGS	<u>Vice Grip</u>	<i>7 Arts Music</i>	74	C ^f
SULTANS OF STRING	<u>Refugé</u>	<i>Ontario Arts Council</i>	74	C ^P
AHMED ABDULLAH	<u>Diaspora Meets AfroHorn</u>	<i>Abdullah/Nri</i>	73	C ^F
AVISHAI COHEN	<u>Big Vicious</u>	<i>Stretch</i>	73	C ^F
DAVE LIEBMAN	<u>Earth</u>	<i>Whaling City Sound</i>	73	C ^F
N. MITCHELL & L. E. HARRIS	<u>Earthseed</u>	<i>FPE Records</i>	73	C ^A
ROGER STREET FRIEDMAN	<u>Rise</u>	<i>Rock Ridge Music</i>	72	C ^b
JASON MILES	<u>Black Magic</u>	<i>Ropeadope</i>	70	C ^P
THE RIPPINGTONS	<u>Open Road</u>	<i>eOne</i>	71	C ^P
MICHAEL THOMAS	<u>Event Horizon</u>	<i>Giant Step Arts</i>	71	C ^F
GORDON GRDINA	<u>Safar-e-Daroon</u>	<i>Songlines</i>	67	C ^P
JULIAN TAYLOR	<u>The Ridge</u>	<i>Julian Taylor</i>	67	C ^P
MARC WAGNON	<u>Interesting Times</u>	<i>Buckyball</i>	64	C ^P
CHAD TAYLOR	<u>The Daily Biological</u>	<i>Cuneiform</i>	63	C ^F
GORDON GRDINA	<u>Nomad</u>	<i>Skirl</i>	59	C ^F

Jazz thrives, our legacy artform!

O's Rating System

O's Place has evolved with our listeners to create a rating system based on three factors: Performance, Sound Quality, and the quality of the Package (including liner notes). The primary criteria is Performance followed by Sound and finally Package.

The ratings (X) have the following weightings and will provide a score from 0-100 with average reviews in the 70 range. Our new ratings are similar to traditional academic ratings.

Performance: 75%, Sound: 20%, Package: 5%

O's Rating Scale (X)

0

65

80

95

Pass

Contemplate

Buy

Strong Buy

O's Place Legends

Nina Simone

Fodder On My Wings

81

Verve
Ballads
2020



Photo: NinaSimone.com

This album was originally recorded on a boutique French label in 1982 after Simone relocated to Paris. It was re-released this year on Verve. The vibe is Afro Caribbean, rootsy blues. Nina's voice has dark, smoky tones that pair well with the distinct, honest messages that she puts in her music. Blues, passion and reality are woven into the fabric of Fodder On My Wings, capturing a transitional period in Nina's life. She chants over funky rhythms on "Vous Etes Seuls, Mais Je Désire Etre Avec Vous" and "I Was Just A Stupid Dog To Them". And there's deep grieving on "Alone Again". This is a classic recording of a legend in her prime!

Final Notes **Bucky Pizzarelli** the legendary jazz guitarist and father of John (g) and Martin (b), died April 1, 2020 from the coronavirus. He was 94. Banjo virtuoso **Eddy Davis**, leader of Woody Allen Jazz Band died from COVID-19 on April 7. He was 80. **Henry Grimes** was a jazz double bassist and violinist. He died April 15 at age 84 from Covid-19. **Leon Konitz** died at the age of 92 on April 15 of complications from Covid-19. He was a composer and alto saxophonist. Jazz saxophonist **Richie Cole** He died at age 72 from natural causes on May 2. **Donald Trenner** was a jazz pianist and arranger He died on May 16 at age 93 of natural causes. **Jimmy Cobb**, the drummer on Miles legendary Kind of Blue died from lung cancer on May 24 at 91. **Leonard Niehaus** was an American alto saxophonist, composer and arranger on the West Coast jazz scene. He died on May 28 from heart related causes at age 90. **Lionel Frederick "Freddy" Cole** was a jazz singer and pianist. He died at 88 from Cardiovascular complications on June 27, 2020. The musical contributions of these fine jazz professionals will remain with us forever.

---> Sound advice at a nice price!

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O's Virtual Review

Qwest^{TV}

Quincy Jones



There are many artists streaming older concerts that they have in their achieves. Some are very good many are just okay.

Qwest^{TV} is Quincy Jones streaming product. It's a vast collection (over 750 hours) of concerts, documentaries, interviews and music specials. The music is well categorized into genres focused on Jazz, Soul, Funk and World music. Pricing is reasonable at \$4.99/month or \$49.99/yr. There are promotions available to try for free.

We enjoyed Marcus Miller plays Baloise Session, a 90-minute sizzling set following his Afrodezia release. Another highlight is Dee Dee Bridgewater singing a Tribute to Ella (1997) with the WDR Big band behind her along with bassist Ray Brown's Trio including Benny Green on piano. These are classic concerts that are timeless. Documentaries like Al Jarreau's Bring Your Life to the Stage are educational treats littered with great video and music clips.

The video is excellent in either HD or 4K with a multitude of angles and meaningful close-ups that put the views on stage with the best looks! Users can mark favorites and the dashboard has useful tools to control viewing and shuttle back to liner notes when desired.

It works great across all of our apple products (desktop, pad, phone).

Just as we were wondering about new material we got an email with "What's Hot on Qwest TV" featuring some action at *Moods*, one of Europe's top venues (Switzerland). We clicked on Fred Wesley & the New J.B.'s and got a large dose of funky jazz featuring Fred and some of our favorite sidemen including Philip Whack (sax), Bruce Cox (d) and bassist Dwayne Dolphin. It's a 2018 set that's screaming for you tonight!

This is differentiated step above and worth the ticket price!

O

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O's Rating Scale (X)

0

65

80

95

Pass

Contemplate

Buy

Strong Buy

O's Book Review

Rhythmic Synchronicity

Dafnis Prieto

Dafnis teaches at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music. He designed a course to help students from all backgrounds get a grip on rhythmic syncopation, music on the offbeat. The exercises are designed for groups of students 2-35 in a classroom setting. He suggests clapping, tapping and/or vocalizing the beats.

These exercises may be difficult starting out but become easier with time and practice, lots of practice! Start with a slower pace and build to a normal pace. Many musicians will have an easier time repeating these syncopated beats as opposed to reading them. So the book comes with 188 downloadable audio tracks so you can hear what the rhythms should sound like!

There are three levels of instruction getting progressively more difficult and complex. Level 2 adds lengthier passages and more transitioning in time signatures. While performing one line can generally be mastered, one person clapping one line while singing another can be rather difficult but fun to try.

Level 3 is extensive and even more engaging. Upon completion, you'll be ready to play with more rhythmic accuracy in a multitude of situations.

And you thought you had rhythm? You can do better with this book and have fun along the way.



Photo: Dafni Prieto



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