



Jazz Magazine

O's PLACE



Published by: D. Oscar Groomes

\$15 Spring 2026, Issue 32.1

What's Inside!

	Page
Traditional Selections	3-6.
O's Big Band Picks	5.
O's Latin Features	7.
O's Vibes Feature	8.
O's Piano Features	9-13.
O's Sax Features	14-15.
O's Drummer Features	16-18.
O's Vocal Features	19-21.
O's Bass Features	22.
O's Trumpet Features	23-25.
O's Guitarist Features	26.
Contemporary Selections	27-31.
<hr/>	
O's Top-10 Scores	2.
O's Ratings System	2.
O's HiFi Sound System	18.
O's Place Jazz Ruler™	28.
O's Jazz Legends	32.
Final Notes	32.
Subscriptions	33.

O'pening Notes

As we turn the pages of this edition of O's Place, we are reminded that jazz, much like life itself, is ever evolving yet still deeply rooted in its origins. We continue to explore the dynamic tapestry of these intersections..

Verve is fusing classic jazz artists with the hip hop culture --> check out the Solomon Mix of Nina Simone! Or Ashley Jackson paying homage to women with an atypical jazz instrument, the harp!

We continue exploring the cultural fusion facilitated by jazz with Ana Hoffman, The Blck Madonna (Ghana), Sona Jobarteh (Gambia), Ola Onabulé (Nigeria), Naoya Ogura (Japan), Dominique Fils-Aimé (Canada), and chants from Tibet and North India..

We also honor the great legends of our past with resurfaced recordings and ongoing extensions of the music as a narrative - a conversation that bridges generations and helps us grapple with change.

O's Place Jazz Magazine

P.O. Box 38430
Charlotte, NC 28278

---> Sound advice at a nice price!

www.OsPlaceJazz.com

Opening Notes cont.

Live music is increasingly being recorded for the utmost in spontaneity. Marques Carroll hits up two venues in Chicago, Peter Furlan performs live in Nyack, NY, and the late Al Foster was captured at Smalls in NYC.

There are over 105 reviews in this issue from straight-ahead to blues to acid. There's something you will enjoy for sure.

Thanks for sharing the journey with us and don't be afraid to try something new. You may be pleasantly surprised!

Cheers!

O&H

"*H*" is Heide, the editor who's been in the background keeping it all clean!

O'S TOP 10* SCORES

1. **BUSELLI/WALLARAB** - [Gennett Suite](#)
2. **LARRY DOUGLAS** - [Music Speaks For Me](#)
2. **LAZY CALIFORNIANS** - [Back to San Francisco](#)
4. **James Suggs** - [For All We Know](#)
5. **COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA** - [Basie Rocks!](#)
5. **Stephen Parisi, Jr.** - [Buddy!](#)
5. **Benjie Porecki** - [Faster Than We Know](#)
5. **RON RIEDER** - [Compositions in Blue...](#)
5. **IAN DOGOLE** - [Last Trane to Africa](#)

* This quarter we list the Top 9 vs. the usual Top 10 with 6 reviews tied in the 10th position!

Click on the "ARTIST'S NAME" to go directly to the review

O's Rating Scale (X)

0 65 80 95

Pass

Contemplate

Buy

Strong Buy

www.OsPlaceJazz.com

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

ARTIST Title <i>Label Perf/Sound</i>	<h2 style="text-align: center;"><u>Top Traditional Picks</u></h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">O's Notes</h3>
CONVERGENCE T^N <u>Reckless Meter</u> <i>Capri</i> 81	<p><i>Convergence</i> is a Colorado-based modern jazz ensemble including Eric Gunnison (p), Greg Gisbert (t), John Gunther (sax), Mark Patterson (tb), Mark Simon (b) and Paul Romaine (d). These guys play on the edge on <u>Reckless Meter</u> but never fall off, remaining coherent and embraceable across all eight selections. “Springaling”, “Margaret Clara” featuring Patterson, “It’s One Or Not One”, and “Big Boot” are some of the highlights in a strong session.</p>
PLAINS PEAK <u>Someone to</u> <u>Someone</u> T^A <i>Illinois Arts</i> <i>Council</i> 80	<p><i>Plains Peak</i> is a free jazz quartet featuring Jon Irabagon (a-sax), Russ Johnson (t), Clark Sommers (b), and Dana Hall (d). They open with the melancholic title track and continue in that vein with “Tiny Miracles (at a funeral for a friend)”. All six selections are Irabagon originals and he’s wailing on “The Pulseman”. Other highlights are “Buggin’ the Bug” and “At What Price Garlic”. We also make note of The Irabagast Record, the liner notes that go well beyond describing the performance to providing a historical tour of the Windy City.</p>
NYYS T^N <u>Lineage</u> 76 <i>Symphonic</i>	<p>NYYS is the New York Youth Symphony Jazz Ensemble, a 17-member band that performs at venues across New York. They’re talented young musicians developing their voices and the songs they perform are all harmonious, on point, and on time. Our favorites are “Compass”, “A Shade of Jade”, “Infant Eyes”, and “Splanky”.</p>
ERICA VON KLEIST T^B <u>Picc Pocket</u> 76 <i>Erica von Kleist</i>	<p>Jazz flautist, composer Erica von Kleist breathes sweet melodies through her piccolo on <u>Picc Pocket</u>. The title refers to her instrument as well as a piece of each of the six original titles. Von Kleist’s band includes Noriko Ueda (b), Yano Vazquez (p), and Anton Kot (d), with guests Jennifer Krupa (tb) on “Bone 2 Picc”, and John Ellis (t-sax) on “Picc Up Lines”. Other highlights are “Let Me Picc Your Brain” and “Picc & Choose”.</p>
JOHN HART T^B <u>New Mantra</u> 74 <i>Steepchase</i>	<p>Veteran jazz guitarist John Hart remains venerable at 64 years old. He leads a trio with bassist Bill Moring and drummer Tim Horner on <u>New Mantra</u>. They perform ten jazz tunes including six Hart originals. Of note are “The Blues Left”, “Stella By Starlight”, and the warm “Reflections”. Hart handles most melodies but there are ample soloing and support from the band.</p>

Sound Advice at a Nice Price

O's Place Features

Mark Wade

New Stages

75
Dot Time
Bebop
2026

Composer, bassist Mark Wade leads his trio with Tim Harrison (p), and Scott Neumann (d). The music is Wade's transformation of classic pieces into modern jazz. The works of Harrison and Neumann are not a shadow in this very balanced program. Mark takes over the melody on "Saga", "Iberia, Part 1", and several others proving that the bass is much more than a rhythm section anchor. His interpretations of classical masterworks into jazz space expands the horizons of fans in both genres.

Photo: Bill Heuberger

Prawntail

Prawntail is a progressive trio featuring pianist Evan Main, bassist Walter Stinson, and Steven Cramer on drums. The self-titled debut includes eight originals that are as provocative as their titles. "There's A Special Place In Hell For The Reagans" is a prime example. Other highlights are "Ripple", the more relaxed "For The Morrow", and "Get A Job".

76 *Endectomorph*
Avant Garde 2026

Live at Maureen's Jazz Cellar

Peter Furlan

Saxophonist Peter Furlan leads a large ensemble in a live session at Maureen's Jazz Cellar in Nyack, NY. His band is Vinnie Cutro (t, flugelhorn), Neil "Nail" Alexander (p), Andrew Beals (a-sax), Erick Storckman (tb), Brad Hubbard (b-sax, b-cl), Joel Newton (g), Charlie Dougherty (b), and Nadav Snir-Zelniker(d). They play ten originals and despite the numerous musicians, present a crisp soundstage. "The Ice Committee", "Blues Squared", "Perfidia" and "Tim's Arrow" stand out.

76
Beany Bop
Modern
2026



Photo: Peter Furlan

Big Band Picks

O's Notes

ARTIST
Title
Label **Rating**

BUSELLI
WALLARAB
JAZZ
ORCHESTRA
The Gennett
Suite **T^C**
Patois **88**

Gennett was an early record label that captured early twentieth century jazz at its best. Trumpeter Mark Buselli and trombonist Brent Wallarab were inspired by those recordings. They lead their jazz orchestra over four movements on The Gennett Suite. They open with a medley, “Tin Roof Blues” featuring Ned Boyd (b-sax), one of many excellent, passionate solos across the bandstand. We liked the ragtime twist on “Dippermouth Blues”. There is nice work by Jeremy Allen (b) on “Interlude” before they conclude the first disc with “Wolverine Blues”, a slow, seductive, and soothing track! The second disc contains Movement 3 Hoagland, and Movement 4: Mr. Jelly Lord, with compositions composed by Hoagy Carmichael and Jelly Roll Morton. The liner notes are a history book and the music is resounding.

COUNT BASIE
ORCHESTRA **T^N**
Basie Rocks!
Green Hill **83**

Vocalist Deborah Silver takes the mic in front of The Count Basie Orchestra on Basie Rocks! The orchestra needs no introduction, and they are on their A-game with guest appearances aplenty. They open with “Paint It Black” featuring Arturo Sandoval (t), and we are off to the races with eleven fresh arrangements of popular tunes in a jazzy format. Trombone Shorty (vocals, tb) breathes fresh life into “Joy To The World”, Kurt Elling (vocals), John Clayton (b), and Steve Jordan (d) shine on “Tainted Love”, and Wycliffe Gordon (vocals, tb) stars on “Old Time Rock & Roll”.

DAVE SLONAKER
 C^N
Shifty Paradigms
Origin **82**

Composer, arranger Dave Slonaker leads a left coast based contemporary big band that has clean, open sound. He draws upon a wealth of Los Angeles talent including Peter Erskine (d), Wayne Bergeron (t), and Bob Sheppard (reeds). Shifty Paradigms includes eight fresh originals that engage the entire roster of players to make a delightful performance. “Blue Windows”, “3rd and Four”, and “Roundabout” are favorites in a strong set.

THE INTERPLAY
JAZZ
ORCHESTRA **T^N**
Bite Your Tongue
Bigtime **81**

The Interplay Jazz Orchestra is led by Joey Devassy (tb) and Gary Henderson (t) but each of the members contribute fresh arrangements and original compositions to the mix! They swing on the opener featuring trumpeter Damien Pacheco and burst with energy on the title track. You can’t fight that infectious groove on “Strassbourg / St. Denis” with solos from Chris Donohue (a-sax) and Baron Lewis (t) followed by rich harmonies on “The Downside Up”. We also enjoyed “My Fooling Heart” featuring Pacheco, and “Night and Day”. Bite Your Tongue is an absolute blast!

Traditional Selections

ARTIST	Title	Label	X	T
WAJDI CHERIF	<u>Live at Fth Theatre, NYC</u>	<i>Wajdi Cherif</i>	73	T ^B
STEVEN HUSTED	<u>Tow Nights - "Live"</u>	<i>Steven Husted</i>	73	T ^C
MICHAEL SARIAN	<u>Live at Cliff Bell's, Vol. II</u>	<i>Shifting Paradigm</i>	73	T ^B
RED NORVO	<u>The Secret Session</u>	<i>Dot Time</i>	72	T ^N
DAVE WILSON	<u>When Even Goes East</u>	<i>Dave Wilson</i>	72	T ^B
CARLOS CORONADO	<u>Melodias Del Retiro</u>	<i>Microscopi</i>	71	T ^L

www.OsPlaceJazz.com

Alba Careta

Panical

Spanish trumpeter, composer Alba Careta blends her native Catalan with traditional jazz to make fresh contemporary jazz-fusion on her latest album Panical. Lucas Martínez (t-sax), Roger Santacana (p), Giuseppe Campisi (b) and Jordi Pallarés (d) support her. Alba soars on “Liliana” and soothes listeners on “Nosaltres les Dones”. We also liked the title track, “Under Water”, “Pangea”, “Diluvi”, and “El Metec”.

78
Microscopi
Latin
2026



Photo: Jazz Sensibilites

O's Latin Features

Gafieira Rio Miami

Beluza Pura



Photo: Gafieira Rio Miami

Gafieira Rio Miami is an 11-piece Brazilian ensemble founded by Diogo Brown. They fuse Brazilian chorinho, pagode, bossa nova, and jazz. This is festive, happy music in the true spirit of Brazil, à la Miami.

78
Latin
Brazilianaire
2026

It's wonderful, listening to this type of music as opposed to listening to the news as *Gafieira* brings pleasure into our living room. Highlights are freshened classics like "So Danço Samba" with Antonio Adolfo (p) & Nestor Torres (fl), "Mas Que Nada" featuring Tony Succar (perc) & Eylon Ramon (vocals), and "Um A Zero" featuring Umandu Costa (g).

Compositions in Blue and Other Hues

83
Meson
Latin
2026

Ron Rieder

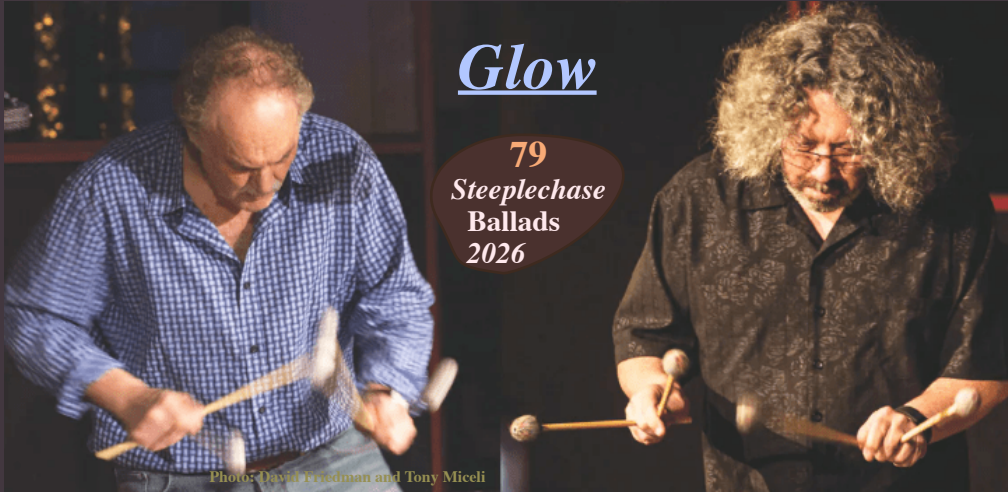


Photo: Ron Rieder

Composer Ron Rieder changes directions on his third recording Compositions in Blue and Other Hues. He moves from Latin to fresh, straight-ahead originals. The band is a quintet featuring John Lockwood (b), Maxim Lubarsky (p), Yaure Muniz (t), Mike Tucker (sax), and Mark Walker (d). There are ragtime elements on "Interlude: Amingus Amonkus", swinging hard on "Be Bim Bop" & "Java Mania", grooving on "Rainy Day", and "Cruising With The Top Down". Rieder has a lot of gas in his tank!

O's Vibes Features

DAVID FRIEDMAN & TONY MICELI



Glow

79

Steeplechase
Ballads
2026

Photo: David Friedman and Tony Miceli

Pairing two vibraphonists is unusual but appreciated on Glow, a tribute to the late vibes and marimba player, Dave Samuels. Both Friedman and Miceli are respected musicians and together they make a delightful performance. The duo has performed together on many occasions, and this is immediately evident as they seamlessly trade registers. Highlights are “Nature Boy”, “When You Wish Upon A Star”, “Falling Grace”, and “Noisy Blues”. We were impressed with the stickiness of the session and remained engaged end to end!

MARK SHERMAN

Vibraphonist Mark Sherman leads a vibrant quartet with Donald Vega (p), Ron Carter (b), and Carl Allen (d) on Bop Contest.

This is a formidable line-up that gets even better with trumpeter Joe Magnarelli, two of the seven notably the title track. “111-Martha’s Prize”, and “Bremond’s Blues” are other standout tunes.

77
Miles High
Bebop
2026

This is a formidable line-up that gets even better with trumpeter Joe Magnarelli, two of the seven notably the title track. “111-Martha’s Prize”, and “Bremond’s Blues” are other standout tunes.



Photo: By Miles High

Bop Contest

O's Piano Features

Faster Than We Know Benjie Porecki



83
Pop+Jazz
Funklove
2026

Benjie Porecki is an established keyboardist and composer, leading a trio with Mark Prince (d) and Gary Baker (b) on Faster Than We Know. Porecki's music is a mature blend of smooth jazz, soul, and funk with broad appeal. It is more complex than a few cool riffs that characterize most smooth jazz offerings today. It reminded us of early Jeff Lorber recordings. "RightDirection", "It's Gonna Be Alright", the spiritual "Headed Home", and "May It Bring You Up" are a few highlights.

Photo: Benjie Porecki

Roberto Fonseca & Vincent Segal

Pop+Jazz 2026
Artwork 74

Nuit Parisienne A La Havane

Nuit Parisienne A La Havane is a duet featuring Cuban pianist Roberto Fonseca and French cellist Vincent Segal. These classically trained musicians enter the improvisational world of jazz with a sense of peace and intimacy. We enjoyed the romance of "Soul Kiss", "Un Home Qui Dort", as this session grew on us, especially "La Mar Quieta" and "Te Extraño".

Kevin Hays

Ugly Beauty

79
Modern
Steeplechase
2026

Photo: GoVibes.com

This is a re-release of 1992's Ugly Beauty featuring pianist Kevin Hays with bassist Larry Grenadier and Jeff Williams on drums. The program is a nice mix of tunes across several tempos. They open with the upbeat "Shade Of Jade" followed by the relaxing "Chelsea Bridge", "The Well", and the title track, some of the six selections that all impart a sense of calmness that facilitates listening, even 25+ years after its initial release!



O's Piano Features

Mark Adams

This Is Neo Soul

82
*DownJazz
R&B+Jazz
2026*

Keyboard wizard Mark Adams played with Roy Ayers back in the day and that is the groove we hear on *This Is Neo-Soul*. The riffs are catchy, danceable, and radio friendly. Take a step back to the 1970s with a New York City urban groove that was intoxicating. The roster of musicians is vast and includes artists that were a part of the scene including Chris DeCarmine (d), Dave Mullins (sax), Monte Croft (vibes), Steve Kroon (perc), and Kenyatta Beasley (t).



Photo: Rod Taylor

Loren Schoenberg

Conductor, producer, musical director

2025 Big Band
Turtle Bay 75

So Many Memories

and pianist Loren Schoenberg revisits a collection composed by Eddie Sauter. It was commissioned by xylophonist Red Norvo for his orchestra but never released until now! Vocalist Kate Kortum is the present day stand in for Mildred Bailey, and she sparkles on “Nice Work”, “September in the Rain”, and “you Go To My Head”. Warren Wolf steps in on xylophone and doesn’t miss a beat on tunes like “I Know That You Know”. *So Many Memories* gives us a fresh view of swing in the 1930s.

Russ Lossing

Proximity Alert

77
*Blasser Music
Avant Garde
2026*

American jazz pianist, composer Russ Lossing assembles a free jazz trio with bassist Mark Helios and drummer Eric McPherson for *Proximity Alert*. These musicians explore and inspire each other over eleven unrehearsed Lossing originals. “Emphasis My Own”, “Proximity Alert”, the relaxed “Rhythmique”, and “Silent Alarm” are among the best!



Photo: Marie Bissé

O's Piano Features

Sullivan Fortner

Southern Nights

79
Artwork
Classic Jazz
2025

Jazz pianist Sullivan Fortner was Roy Hargrove's keyboardist for 8 years before branching out as a leader. It's all first takes on his latest album, a trio set with Peter Washington on bass and drummer Marcus Gilmore, recorded live, unrehearsed, at The Village Vanguard. The mood is New Orleans with hints of ragtime on "Southern Nights", swinging on "Daahoud", a taste of the Caribbean on "Tres Palabras". There's nothing overly flashy, but everything fits wonderfully for this pleasant, laid-back session.



Photo: Sullivan Fortner

James Fernando

76 Spring Garden
2026 Pop+Jazz

Philly 3

Pianist, composer James Fernando leads a trio with bassist Dan McCain and Kyan Williams on drum for Philly 3. Sam Harris steps in on bass for two tracks notably Errol Garner's "Like It Is", the lone cover alongside eight originals. We liked the ragtime swing of "The Parisian", "Singularity", the rolling "Neon Kyon", and "Beings On Toast". Fernando is shining on his sixth release as a leader.

Tobin Mueller

Come In Funky

78
Arts Forge
funky jazz
2026

Keyboardist Tobin Mueller is back with longtime collaborator Woody Mankowski on sax and bassist Ron Carter. Carter opens the title track and explodes on "Franken Anny" as they Come In Funky for sure! "Thank You" is an interesting approach to one of Sly's great songs, masked by lots of white noise. We enjoyed "Forrests Fire" "Cliff's Edge", "Mueller's Wheel", and "Windowshade" featuring Woody Mankowski (sax). This one makes you want to move!

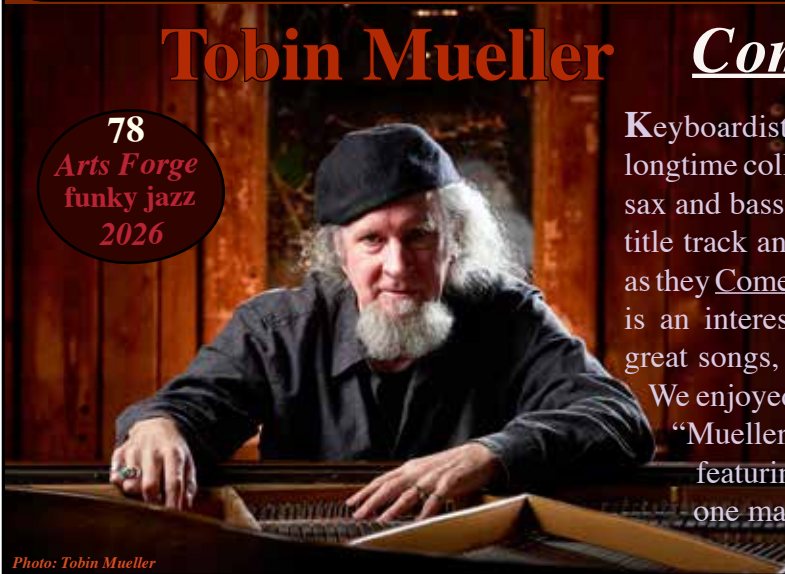


Photo: Tobin Mueller

O's Piano Features

Johannes Wallmann

Not Tired

77

**Fusion
Shifting
Paradigm
2025**

Pianist and composer Johannes Wallmann collaborates with bassist Nick Moran in a quintet with Ingrid Jensen (t), Dayna Stephens (t-sax), and Adam Nussbaum (d). Guest Mitchell Shiner adds glockenspiel and vibes on two selections notably the opener, “Not Tired”. Moran composed “Twelve Thirty-Four” along with his scintillating “Intro” solo. All the other selections are Wallmann originals. We also liked “The Towel Snapper” and “Bad Apple”.

Photo: Max Wendt

Steve Allee

**76 Jazzville
2026 Big Band**

Full Circle

Pianist, composer Steve Allee is back with his large ensemble conducted by John Clayton for Full Circle. The seven selections range from peaceful ballads like “Brothers” featuring Jim Pugh (tb) to spirited tunes line “The Avenue”. We liked the mysterious “Zeebs” featuring John Raymond (t), “Ransom Place” with Ansyn Banks (t), and the title track.

Lafayette Harris, Jr.

All In Good Time

Pianist Lafayette Harris, Jr. leads a core trio with Kenny Davis (b) and Jerome Jennings (d). They perform a bubbly session blending new Orleans jazz with a festive dose of the Caribbean. Special guests, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt and saxophonist Houston Person adds warmth on “Long Hot Summer Blues” and Pelt plays on two more tracks, notably “Time”. We also enjoyed the spirited “It’s Time” and “We Are One In The Spirit”. It’s All in Good Time.

77
**Swing
Savant
2025**



Photo: Brooklyn Conservatory of Music

O's Piano Features

Ben Sidran

Are We There Yet

Ben Sidran is a polished veteran, keyboardist and producer who plays an insatiable mix of groove and swing. He was a part of the popular Steve Miller band. Are We There Yet is a live set recorded at the Sunside in Paris. He picks up the mic for a stab at rap on “Victime de La mode” and to deliver his message on the title track. His band is in lock step, including

Leo Sidran (d), Billy Peterson (double bass), Max Darmon (electric bass), Rick Margitza (sax), Romain Roussouliere (g), and Moses Patrou (perc). “Panda”, “Ever Since The World Ended”, and “Picture Him Happy” are a few of the best. It works!

81
R&B+Jazz
Bonsai
2025



Photo: Ben Sidran

Chris Parker

75 Modern
Circle9 2026

Reunion

Pianist, composer Chris Parker leads a septet with Doug Beavers (tb), Alejandro Aviles (a-sax, s-sax), Rob Thomas (violin), Dave Riekenberg (b-sax, b-cl), Tony Marino (b), Marko Marcinko (d, bongos, perc), and Luisito Quintero (congas, perc). There's a twist of Latin on “Just A Thought”, a taste of funk on “Been This Way Before”, “Stages”, & “Boonchaka”. Chris is returning from a debilitating stroke a few years back that left him without the use of his left hand. He's in full form, celebrating a Reunion and gratitude with his supporters and old tunes. It's remarkable and enlightening!

Rick Roe

Wake Up Call

Michigan based pianist, composer Rick Roe leads a quartet on Wake Up Call, his latest recording on Cold Plunge Records. The rhythm section is strong with Robert Hurst (b), and drummer Nate Winn (d), while Marcus Elliot (sax) handles most melodies. Roe is the glue, holding it together. The program features the music of Gregg Hill. They open with “Inside Straight” with each member establishing themselves with solos. We enjoyed the swinging, blues of the title track, “The Return of Mr. Pea”, “La Canción” with a rich solo by Hurst, and “Wide River”.

81
Modern
Cold Plunge
2026



Photo: RoeJazz.com

O's Sax Features

Photo: John Seuderi



Jerry Weldon *The Summit*

80
Modern
Cellar Music
2025

Jerry Weldon is a polished tenor saxophonist and bandleader who has performed in many great bands with Lionel Hampton, Harry Connick, Jr., Jack McDuff, and Art Blakey. Weldon's current band includes Alonzo Demetrius (t), Peter Li (tb), Mike Bond (p), Jason Clotter (b), and Carmen Intorre Jr. (d). They are The Summit. They perform live at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center in New Jersey. It is a swinging set of eight tunes that are mostly at breakneck pace, but Jerry gets passionate on "Good Morning Heartache". We also enjoyed "You Go to My Head" and the classic "On The Sunny Side Of The Street".

Carl Clements

Saxophonist, flautist, composer

2026 Fusion
Greydisc 74

Retrospective

Carl Clements is backed by the Real Jazz Trio for Retrospective. Bassist Johannes Schaedlich and pianist Jean-Yves Jung serve up fine solos on "Almodovar" behind Clements on flute. Drummer Jens Biehl is there with accents when needed, otherwise keeping the pace. They continue with that peaceful vibe on "Procession". Carl switches to sax to warm up the set on "Remnants". There are nine varied originals that make a good listening session.

Every Part of Me

Jackiem Joyner

Smooth jazz saxophonist Jackiem Joyner strives to take it up a notch on his ninth album Every Part of Me. He incorporates elements of funk and soul with the radio friendly riffs, pouring his heart into each selection. Joyner plays/programs most instruments but gets help from W. Timothy Bailey and guitarist A. Ray "The Weeper" Fuller. Brian Simpson (p) is featured on "Just Like That" with drummer Brandon Harris and bassist Jerome Randall. "Here To Stay", "Never Letting Go", and "Boss" are also notable.

Photo: Jackiem Joyner



75
Smooth
Shanachie
2026

O's Sax Features

77
Fusion
Fresh Sound
2026

Lena Bloch

Marina

Composer and saxophonist Lena Bloch assembles a quintet with Jacob Sacks (p), Ken Filiano (b), Kyoto Kitamura (vocals), and Michael Sarin (d) for Marina, Bloch's perception of the works of Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva. There are seven distinct selections that capture intense emotions. They reflect a revolution, famine, and loss, but also resilience and determination. Each of the musicians contribute, illustrating the work and bringing it to light today. "Tired", "The Time Will Come" and "Immeasurable" were our favorites.

Photo: Sam Dillon

Dave Pietro

74 Steeplechase
2026 Modern

The Butterfly Effect

Saxophonist, composer Dave Pietro leads a quintet on The Butterfly Effect, his second release on Steeple Chase. The band includes Gary Versace (p), Scott Wendholt (t), Jay Anderson (b), and Adam Cruz (d). They perform six of Dave's originals with three covers of popular tunes, notably Bacharach's "Promises, Promises". We also liked the title track and "Idle Tears", each containing detailed nuances and fresh musings.

Ragology

Ricky Alexander

Ricky Alexander plays clarinet on another 1920s throwback, Ragology. There's a direct lineage to New Orleans with ragtime and stomp. His band is a quintet with Jerron Paxton (banjo, vocals), Conal Fowkes (p), Rob Adkins (b), and Kevin Dorn (d). They are well suited to delivering a fresh sample of true ragtime music. Highlights are "Dizzy Fingers", "Blackstick", "Little Bits", and "Sweetheart of Mine" featuring Paxton on the mic.

77
Swing
Turtle Bay
2026

Photo: Elvira Broman

O's Drummer Features

Photo: John Clay

83

Modern
Clay Tone
2026



John Clay

About Time

Veteran drummer, producer John Clay leads a fine band that includes Enrique Haneine (p), Sean Conly (b), Shunzo Ohno (t, flügelhorn) and Matt Garrison (sax. Vocalist Ruby Pucillo adds variety to the set on” Alice in Wonderland” and “Highway 14”. We also liked “Dubai”, a fresh arrangement of “Stella By Starlight”, and “My New Friend Old Friend”.

Billie Davies

2026 Avant Garde
Billie Davies 74

2455

Drummer/percussionist Billie Davies takes a leap into the future with 2455, a collection of electronic music that is a prediction of what we’ll be jamming to in the 2400s. Billie plays electronic drums, percussion, and electronic piano, with Branden James Lewis (t, digitized keyboards, synths), and Damani Butler (electronic loops). It sounds like a score from a science fiction movie and then some! “The Root of All”, “Blue Moon Dance”, and “Tabula Rasa” are notable.

Neil Gray

In The Streets

77

Modern
Cellar Music
2026



Photo: Neil Gray

Vancouver based drummer Neil Gray honors the local jazz scene on In The Streets. He leads a band including Cory Weeds (t-sax), Julian Borkowski (t), Bruno Hubert (p), and Conrad Good (b). The song titles refer to the vibe, “Latin Fiasco” & “Shotgun Blues”, as well as local venues like “Frankie’s Ghost”. Vocalist lightens the mood on “Night and Day”. They swing hard all the way through!

O's Drummer Features

Brandon Sanders

82
Modern
Savant
2025

Brandon Sanders got a late start with his drumming career but is on a roll with his third album as a leader in three years. He focuses on bringing the “feel good” element to the mix. That sometimes means playing less so that the melody comes through loud and clear as on “Soul Eyes”. The music on his latest release certainly makes a Lasting Impression, with strong performances from Stacey Dillard (t-sax), Eric Scott Reed (p), and Warren Wolf (vibes). Jazzmeia Horn returns to the band from Sanders debut album adding two vocal selections, notably “Until You Come Back To Me” including guest artists Ameen Saleem (b) and Tyler Bullock (p).

Photo: Brandon Sanders

Lasting Impression

David Basse

74 R&B+Jazz
Big Head 2026

The War Within

David Basse’s oratory vocal style that he pairs with blue stories and contemporary rhythms on The War Within. Basse plays drums and gets strong support from Stuart Elster (p) and Luther Hughes (b). We found ourselves increasingly enjoying this light-hearted, head bobbing session. Of note are “Vacation From The Blues”, “Strike When Your Iron Is Hot” with a cool solo from Hughes, “Like Jazz”, and “Something Fried”.

Matt Garrity

Suits and Scotches

Photo: Matt Garrity

Drummer, composer Matt Garrity is a well-regarded, side man who found his voice on the NYC jazz scene three decades ago. Suits and Scotches is his debut as a leader, in a quartet with Vito Dieterle (t-sax), Steve Einerson (p), and David Ambrosio (b). Garrity makes the title track his paradise with an explosive solo while allowing his companions to shine as well. Einerson tickles the ivory on “Old Folks”, and Dieterle blends nice sax work on “Search For Peace” balancing the effort, a combination of originals and standards.

79
Modern
Steeplechase
2026



O's Drummer Features

Colin Hinton

74 *Endectomorph*
Avant Garde 2026

Three Suites

Drummer percussionist Colin Hinton forms a trio with pianist Santiago Leibson and bassist Eivind Opsvik. They perform three introspective suites that are at times melancholic but always engaging. Hinton provides excellent percussion and drum work on “Skumringstid - Movement I”, with Leibson and Opsvik coming into the spotlight on “Movement III”. We enjoyed the “Elegy for Ralph” suite best of all.

Ian Dogole

The Last Trane to Africa

The Last Trane To Africa is an adventurous musical encounter full of mysterious sounds and vibrant percussion. The inspiration is John Coltrane, and Dogole’s work is an appropriate salute. The opener, “Africa” took us into Dogole’s space and we were hooked. Sheldon Brown (b-cl) is strong on “Dahomey Dance”, Richard Howell (t-sax) engages on the earthy “Tunji” with poetry from Avotcja. We also enjoyed Dogole’s work on kalimba for “John Coltrane” with vocals from Howell.

82
Pop+Jazz
Global Fusion
2026

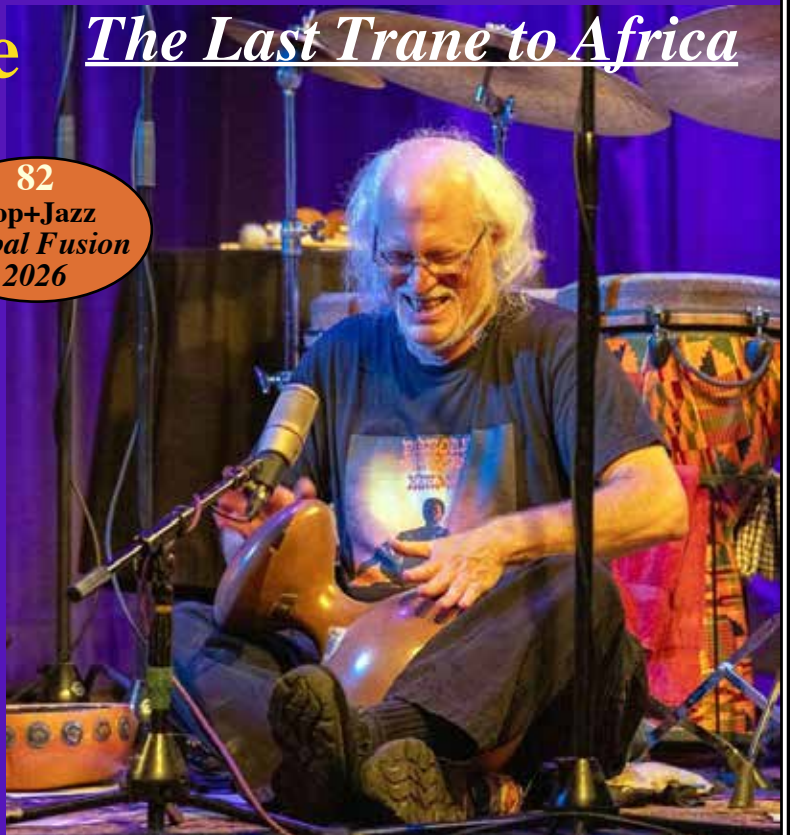


Photo: David De Hart

O's primary listening is done with a Sony XA777ES SACD player, Ayre C5-xe^{MP} CD player, vpi H/W 40 (40th Anniv) turntable with Gimble Tonearm, Schiit Skoll F Phono Preamp, Jeff Rowland Consonance Preamp, two Jeff Rowland Model 1 amplifiers (balanced mono mode), B&L W 800D speakers, Transparent Audio interconnects, and E.S.P. Essence Reference Power Distribution System.

Our Video Theatre System uses Classe CA-200 amplifier, Mirage M1 speakers, Cardas Hex 5C speaker wire, Sony SXR D overhead projector, and 7.1 Surround.

O's Vocal Features

THE BLCK MADONNA

Between the Lines

The Blck Madonna is jazz vocalist, producer Ana Hoffman, a Ghanaian American who grew up between the two countries. She fell in love with jazz in college and now presents her debut Between The Lines, a compelling case! Her voice is rich and strong, bringing power into fresh arrangements of jazz classics. “Afro Blue”, “Round Midnight”, and “My Funny Valentine” are more than covers. Hoffman goes deeper to coax her own feelings. We’re awaiting the next chapter, hopefully with some originals.



82
Ballads
Downtown
2026

Photo: Bob Krasner

The Hot Toddies

The Hot Toddies play New Orleans

74 Prohibition
2024 Ballads

Triple Step

style jazz with vocals mostly from Hannah Gill. The horns are crisp and spirited with a solid rhythm section playing across 17 classic tunes. The emcee is Dewitt Fleming who adds tap dancing on “Bernie’s Tune”. Queen Ester sings two selections notably “Is You Is Or Is You Ain’t My Baby”. You know these tunes and you’ll love these arrangements!

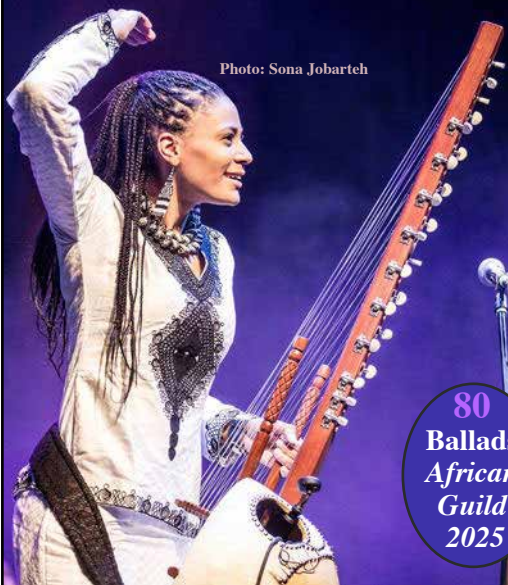


Photo: Sona Jobarteh

80
Ballads
African
Guild
2025

SONA JOBARTEH

Badinyaa Kumoo

Sona Jobarteh is a Gambian multi-instrumentalist, singer, and composer. She also plays the kora, a harp-like instrument that is prominent in West Africa. Badinyaa Kumoo is centered around a rhythmic, popular, African vibe that resonated with us. We liked “Dunoo” with Musa Filly Jobarteh, “Kambengwo” featuring Youssou N’dour, “Ubntu”, “Gambia”, and “Nna Kangwo” with Jock Webb (harmonica), and “Nna Mooya” featuring Kirk Whalum (sax). The liner notes are excellent with detailed notations for each selection.

O's Vocal Features

PAUL MARINARO

Mood Ellington

82
Origin
Ballads
2026

Paul Marinaro brings his rich baritone to the stage, armed with a strong band that includes a tight rhythm section, and strings that embellish his every word. We love the instrumental harmonies that support Paul's vocals across three dynamic sets over two discs as he celebrates the music of Duke on Mood Ellington. There are twenty-five classics arranged by twelve artists including Mike Allemana (g), Alan Broadbent, John Clayton, and Bill Cunliffe.



Photo: cousinadaniel.com

Ola Onabulé

74 Ballads
Aliud 2026

It's Never Over

British, Nigerian vocalist Ola Onabulé is a polished artist with over 20 years of professional experience. It's Never Over is his latest release with The Hazelrigg Brothers, George (p), Geoff (b), and Thomas Käfel (d). Ola has a vocal style that has stage-like characteristics, suggesting opera or Broadway performances. Fans of Onabulé and the Hazelrigg Brothers will hear hints of their respective genius but the combination is atypical for each, not bad but different. The recording is unamplified, acoustic, and noteworthy behind lyrics that reflect on the destructive aftermath of a troubled relationship. "The Voodoo", "The Girl That She Was", and the title track stand out.

81
Ballads
AAB
2026

Allen Austin-Bishop

Glory

Allen Austin-Bishop spreads his smoky, passionate vocals across eleven selections on Glory. These are blues-based ballads well paired for Bishop tone and range. His band, Dorian Ford (keyboards), Mao Yamada (b), James Edmunds (perc), Daniel Farris (g), and Katie Edwards (sax) are also in sync, providing complimentary rhythms in a supportive role. Collectively they present Allen's best album to date! We liked "Groovejet", "A Song for the Lovers", and "The Sea" in a laid-back set.



Photo: Allen Austin-Bishop

O's Vocal Features

Photo: Karla Harris



Karla Harris

Merge

Jazz vocalist Karla Harris shines throughout her fifth album, Merge. She is joined by a talented band that includes keyboardist, co-producer Tyrone Jackson. They provide strong rhythms supporting Harris on classics like “For The Love Of You”, “Sugar”, and “What You Won’t Do For Love”. There are thirteen selections including two originals, notably “Sweet Land” with Harris also stepping in on piano.

79
Ballads
Gobykar
2025

James Judson

James Judson is a crooner, pianist by an orchestra, including strings. Mike Gurrola (b) and Gary Matsumoto (p) have notable contributions as well. The sound is grandiose across thirteen freshened classics. Of note are “The Shadow of Your Smile”, “My Imagination”, “On and On”, and “All of Me”, a duet with Laura Cole. There are plentiful solos including from producer Tim Sonnefeld (g), Michael Campagna (t) and Bob Sheppard (sax).

77 Ballads 2026
Persimmon Road

Songs of My Dreams...

with a warm inviting voice backed with a warm inviting voice backed by an orchestra, including strings. Mike Gurrola (b) and Gary Matsumoto (p) have notable contributions as well. The sound is grandiose across thirteen freshened classics. Of note are “The Shadow of Your Smile”, “My Imagination”, “On and On”, and “All of Me”, a duet with Laura Cole. There are plentiful solos including from producer Tim Sonnefeld (g), Michael Campagna (t) and Bob Sheppard (sax).

Dominique Fils-Aimé

My World Is the Sun

76
Ballads
Ensouled
2026

Photo: Dominique Fils-Aimé

Singer, songwriter Dominique Fils-Aimé has earthy, rich vocals and accompaniment that is well-matched. Bassist and producer Jacques Roy does a fine job of keeping the sound stage clean, allowing musicians to decorate Dominique’s expressions. Elli Miller Maboungou (perc), Hichem Khalfa (t), and Shawn Mativetsky (tabla) add notable colorations. My World Is The Sun starts out with an inspirational song “Ma Mélodie” sung by Dominique’s mother Claudette Thomas, then the haunting “Sea of Clouds”. When the dust clears, we warmed up to “Echappée Belle”, “Life Remains”, and “The River”. We also liked Fils-Aimé’s take on “Ma Mélodie [outro]”.



O's Bass Features

Stephen Parisi

83
*Shifting
Paradigm
Fusion
2026*

Buddy!

Bassist Stephen Parisi was born in Buffalo but now makes his home in Chicago where he released his debut recording *Buddy!* Josh Achiron (g), Nicholas Olynciw (p), Kabir Dalawari (d), and Jordan Lerner (sax) join him. We enjoyed the title track, the relaxing “Tro”, the upbeat “Lascialo”, the warmth of “The Judge”, and the sax/drum exchange on “The Kid”. This is a fine start for Parisi, and we look to hear more.



Photo: Stephen Parisi

Peter Paulson

74 *Square Peg
Pop+Jazz 2026*

Would'a... Could'a... Should'a...

Bassist, composer Peter Paulson leads a quintet with Chris Hanning (d), Ron Stabinsky (p), Jonathan Ragonese (sax) and John Swana (EVI) on *Would'a... Could'a... Should'a...* Paulsen is dedicated to educating the next generation, but he is also a capable performer as demonstrated on this release. The music is refreshing modern jazz. “More Importantly, How Are You?”, “Fine Feathered”, “Twilight Curtain Call”, and “Inner Chambers” are notable.

Jakob Dreyer

82
*Fusion
Fresh Sound
New Talent
2025*

Roots and Things

Bassist Jakob Dreyer assembles a new quartet with Tivon Pennicott (t-sax), Sasha Berliner (vibes), and Kenneth Salters (drums). Sasha’s work gives *Roots and Things* fresh coloration especially on tunes like “Follower”. Jason gets into the groove on “Constellation” with a strong solo behind Pennicott who leads most of the melodies. There are several brief, swinging interludes that provide cohesion for the songs. We also enjoyed Salters work on “Fight Or Flights”. Everything gels nicely here on Dreyer’s third release, truly a charm!



Photo: Jakob Dreyer

O's Trumpet Features

Larry Douglas Music Speaks For Me

Get ready for fierce beats, cool rhythms, and some spoken word, make that rap. Guest vocalist Gregory Cone sings on the opening title track. We also liked “Return of the Mack” featuring Douglas on vibes with hip hop artists Amen Kush, Fiyaman and percussionist Jorge Pineda. We also liked their take of “Outstanding” and “Me and My Chiba” featuring Ram Dog. Oh, wait a minute, there’s a jazz ballad: “They Call Her Zadie Mae” featuring Clifford Lamb (p) and Douglas on trumpet and the mellow finale, “All I Am”.

86

R&B+Jazz
Swajola
2026



Photo: Facebook

Glenn Makos

76 R&B+Jazz
Stop Time
2026

Arrowsic

Trumpeter Glenn Makos leads his band Brū with Craig Yaremko (sax), Victor Lin (Rhodes), Sebastian de Urquiza (b), and Daniel Silva (d). The funky rhythm section sets the tone over the entire session, and it’s a good one, incorporating some Brazilian jazz, and jazz-fusion. Silva explodes on “Sulawesi”, “Liquid Sunshine” features Lin’s fleeting keyboard work, Yaremko and Urquiza shine on “The Last Straw”, and Makos leads the title track and the mellow “Sunflower Morning”. That balance of power extends across the entire session.

84

R&B+Jazz
Arbors
2025

James Suggs

For All We Know

Trumpeter James Suggs serves up a contemporary jazz outing on For All We Know combining fresh arrangements of classic soul, jazz and blues songs. He is supported by an excellent band including Herlin Riley (d), Jeremy Carter (t-sax), Alejandro Arenas (b), and Seth Finch (p). Vocalist Allison Nash adds soulful vocals to "At Your Best" and "Free". We also enjoyed “Grazin’ In The Grass”, the swinging blues of “Ping Pong Fellowship Pt. 1” & “Black Or White”, the New Orleans groove of "St. James Infirmery," and “Moten Swing”.



Photo: University of South Florida

O's Trumpet Features

two from **Marques Carroll**

Live at Andy's Jazz Club



81
Modern
JMarq
2026

This is a fine example of classic jazz performed live! Andy's is one of Chicago's best venues and the recording captures the music along with unobtrusive audience ambience. Trumpeter Marquis Carroll is a regular at Andy's with his quintet including Brent Griffin (a-sax), Christian Dillingham (b), Greg Artry (d) and Julius Tucker (p). Artry shines on "The Ancestors' Call Upon Us". We enjoyed the entire session!

81
Modern
JMarq
2026

Live at Winter's Jazz Club

Trumpeter Marquis Carroll lines up a quintet with Brent Griffin (a-sax), Ernie Adams (d), Micah Collier (b), and Julius Tucker (p). This is the first of several recordings at prominent venues around Chicago. The beauty of Carroll's live music sessions is that they sound fresh on every occasion. They play six well developed songs including "Soulful" and "Miller Time" before wrapping up with a warm taste of Latin on "Tin Tin Deo". Live at Winter's Jazz Club is a winner.



Naoya Ogura

Japanese trumpeter, composer on Colors of A Journey, his latest release. The band is precise, dynamic, passionate, and highly energetic across all tempos. "Moon", "That's The Idea", "Everything Happens to Me", and "I Love You" are highlights.

77 Big Band
Bandstand 2026

Colors of A Journey

Naoya Ogura leads a jazz orchestra

O's Trumpet Features

two from **Kirk Knuffke** Brother

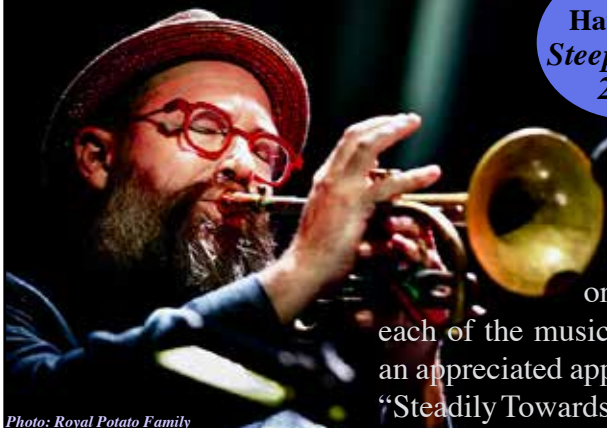


Photo: Royal Potato Family

77
Hard Bop
Steeplechase
2026

Kirk is a polished cornetist and bandleader playing in a trio with Tommy Andersson (b) and Charlie Burnham (violin) on Brother. He continues to reimagine his space blending free jazz with hard bop in a very creative set of fourteen songs. The program is a mix of songs by Yusuf Lateef and Knuffke originals. They keep the stage open, allowing each of the musicians to blossom without interference. This is an appreciated approach that works well on “Brother Yusef” and “Steadily Towards The Open Window”. We also enjoyed the more engaged trio on songs like “To Mr. Dolphy”.

76 Hard Bop 2025
Royal Potato Family

Window

Kirk is a polished cornetist and bandleader playing in a trio with Stormu Takeishi (b) and Bill Goodwin (d) on Window. They take a minimalist approach across thirteen brief selections. Kirk orates on “A Divine Image”, “Runs Red”, “A Little More So” and the title track surrounded by nine instrumentals notably “Mr. Bill”.

Joe Magnarelli Decidedly So

79
Bebop
Cellar Music
2026

Joe is a polished jazz trumpeter and composer with over 5 decades of experience! His latest release, Decidedly So is an energetic encounter with a snappy rhythm section including Jeremy Manasia (p), Clovis Nicholas (b), and Rodney Green (d). They start off cooking with “D.J.”, one of four Magnarelli originals. Trombonist Steve Davis and Magnarelli breathe warm harmonies into “10th Anniversary” before the rich classic “When I Fall In Love”. They end the set going around the horn on “Jimmy’s Blues”, featuring the rhythm section.



Photo: Joe Magnarelli

O's Guitar Features

Collage

78
Pop+Jazz
Outside In
2026

Alex Wintz

Guitarist Alex Wintz is back on the scene with Collage, a contemporary set with Victor Gould (p), Matt Penman (b), and Jimmy MacBride (d). The music reflects Wintz's life experiences and they are generally pleasant! The program includes fresh arrangements of classics and some original songs as well. Our favorites are "Better Half", "It's Been A Minute", and "Pondhop". Alex stretches out on "The Shadow of Your Smile" including excellent solos by Gould and Penman.



Photo: Oresti Tsonopoulos

Tom Lippincott

74
Fusion 2026
T Lippincott

Ode To The Possible

Tom Lippincott is a jazz guitarist and composer from Hollywood, CA. He leads a band with David Fernandez (sax), Marty Quinn (b), Lucas Apostoleris (d), and Camila Meza (vocals). Ode to the Possible is a throwback album that reimagines jazz-fusion from the 1980s from Lippincott's perspective. The theme is greatly varied but centered around Lippincott. "Bell Tower", "An Inhabitant of Carcosa", "Stella By Searchlight", "Lynchian", and the interludes are a some of the best.

Heartbreak City

Larry McCray

78
Blues Alive
Blues
2025

Photo: Larry McCray



Guitarist, vocalist Larry McCray has been performing the blues for decades and still performs live sets. Born in Arkansas and starting his music career in Detroit he's become one of the best blues artists under the radar. On his latest release Larry is singing classic blues starting with "Try To Be A Good Man", "Heartbreak City", and "Stop Your Crying". His accompanying guitar is crying as well, emboldening the stories. He gets support from several artists including Reese Wynans (organ), Kirk Fletcher (g), background vocalists Jade Macrae & Dannielle De Andrea, and some guitar work from co-producer Joe Bonamassa on "I Know What I've Done".

ARTIST Title <i>Label</i> Rating	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Top Contemporary Picks</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">O's Notes</h3>
NEGATIVE PRESS PROJECT <u>CYCLES I</u> C^F <i>Envelopmental</i> <i>Music</i> 81	<p>The Oakland-based <i>Negative Press Project</i> is back with their 5th recording, <u>Cycles I</u>, a refined statement. Ruthie Dineen (p) and Andrew Lion (b) lead the octet with The Friction Quartet and a few guest artists across a dozen warm selections. “Aelorean”, “Cycles Brilliant”, “Be” and “Libre” are just a few of the rich blends of brass and strings. There are many musicians, but the sound is always complimentary, never congested.</p>
TIBET C^F <u>THE VOICE OF THE</u> <u>TANTRA</u> <i>Ocora</i> 78	<p>Monastery of Gyütö is a series of inspirational chants meditation has done in Tibet. The session was recorded in 1975 by the first generation of Tibetan monks in exile in India. Their harmonic vocal style is known as the voice of the tantras, rich in the lower registers. They incorporate instrumentation on the second half, with horns, drums, and cymbals, elevating the majestic feel. The audio quality is very good.</p>
NINA SIMONE <u>SOLOMON MIX</u> CA <i>Verve</i> 74	<p>Celebrating Nina Simone’s 70th birthday, the Solomon Mix of “Take Care of Business” is a genre buster, blending Nina’s original vocals with pumping bass and drumbeats. It takes Simone into the club scene with house music. There are two fresh mixes alongside the original. You’ll either love it or hate it! We enjoyed it.</p>

Ashley Jackson

Ashley Jackson is a powerful woman, an activist, professor, a master of the harp and a wonderful example of someone embracing DEI in all that she does. Cover Girl in her vehicle to transform the works of several women on the pop music scene. This is a beautiful encounter with Jackson displaying the full range of the harp. “Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood” and “I’m Every Woman” are classics that the old folks will recognize. She also plays “Udhero Na” by Pakistani singer & composer Arooj Aftab, and a fine arrangement of The Cranberries “Dreaming My Dreams”. Those are just four of the eight selections, worth the price of the full album alone!

Photo: Julia Comita



Cover Girl

77

Decca

Pop+Jazz

2026

O's Place Features

Mark Christian Miller

Strange Meadowlark

75
Ballads
Sliding Door
2026

Mark Christian Miller is a dynamic, conversational, crooner that easily engages listeners. Strange Meadowlark is his fourth recording and it's a winner. He gets support from a polished band including Chris Dawson (p), Chuck Berghofer (b), Joe LaBarbera (d), and Robert Kyle (sax, fl). Josh Nelson (p) joins the band on "Early In The Morning". After opening with the swinging "Mr. Kicks", Mark settles into a wealth of warm ballads like "Hello Love", "Dream", and "Sometimes".



Photos: Alisa Banks

O's Place Jazz Ruler™

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

Dave Stryker

77
Strikezone
Bebop
2026

Guitarist Dave Stryker mixes bop and blues on Blue Fire in a trio with Jared Gold on organ and drummer McClenty Hunter. This is a well-oiled team with Stryker blazing through the melodies effortlessly. Gold is right there with him on the title track, just a sample of the cooking. We also enjoyed the warmth of "The Folks Who Live On The Hill" and "Every Dark St". Regardless of tempo, this is a strong display of good blues, bop and ballads. It was Stryker's first recording at the legendary Van Gelder studio, and they were inspired by the history.



Blue Fire

Photo: Chris Drukker

O's Place Features

Steve Khan

81

Blue Canoe
Fusion
2026

Dreamsville

Veteran jazz guitarist Steve Khan had an abundance of music for his 2005 recording, *The Green Field* but they were “in the zone” and took advantage of it recording Henry Mancini’s “*Dreamsville*”. It is released as a single now, 20 years later with all its splendor! Steve’s accompaniment is John Patitucci (b), Jack DeJohnette (d) and Manolo Badrena (perc). It’s noteworthy.



Photo: Steve Khan

The Inter Section

78 Pop+Jazz 2026

Going Places

The Inter Section is the melding of *The Inter Section* 25 musicians from 10 countries. They come together in multiple configurations presenting happy music over a dozen selections. Going Places is contemporary jazz instrumentals with a true global perspective. There’s a festive beat on “The Country Runs Through It”, a flamingo twist on “I’ll Get Right On It” featuring guitarist Manuel Montero, before the laid back “So Much Love” with Manuel Rodríguez Riva (harmonica).

78

R&B+Jazz
Thirty Tigers
2025

THE WOOD BROTHERS

Puff of Smoke

Bassist, vocalist Chris Wood, guitarist, vocalist Oliver Wood, and multi-instrumentalist, vocalist Jano Rix are *The Wood Brothers*. They are a roots band combining folk, blues and jazz into an entertaining mix. Puff Of Smoke is a celebration of the 20th anniversary of their debut recording and they’re still on top of their game with eleven new originals. “Witness”, “Pray God Listens”, “The Trick”, and “Slow Rise” are highlights in a set that help ease the brutal realities we’re facing.



Photo: Laura Partain

O's Place Features

The Lazy Californians are a festive band led by Cameron Washington (t, vocals). They open with energy on “Back To San Francisco”, followed by a strong taste of New Orleans on “Mélée in the Vieux Carré” including Benwar Shephard on sousaphone. There’s a stirring rendition of “Movin’ On Up” featuring vocalist Shamila Ivory. We also enjoyed “Busted Key Stomp”, “Ricochet” featuring Todd Woodward, “The Cookout” with Glenn Appell (harmonica), and “I Ain’t Drunk”. The stories are entertaining and the rhythm is solid end to end.

Lazy Californians *Back to San Francisco*



Photo: Willy Johnson

86
R&B+Jazz
Angel Island
2026

BLACK NILE *Indigo Garden*

81
Acid Jazz
MASS MoCA
2026

Photo: Black Nile

Black Nile features two brothers Aaron (sax) and Lawrence (b) Shaw, a Los Angeles duo combining urban grooves, sampling and a generous dose of electronics with syncopated jazz. They include keyboardists Luca Mendoza & Brian Hargrove, and Myles Martin (d) as they take jazz into a fresh new grove that is exciting a younger generation. They set the stage with “The Ritual of Returning”, tuning up for a set of free expression. “City of Silent Angels” is a platform for Aaron on soprano saxophonist and he’s up for it. We also enjoyed the mellow “City Of Fire”, “Ashes in the Berkshires”, and the retro sounds on “Slauson Fog” courtesy of the wah-wah and synthesizer. It’s even better on successive takes, so take the time to embrace it.



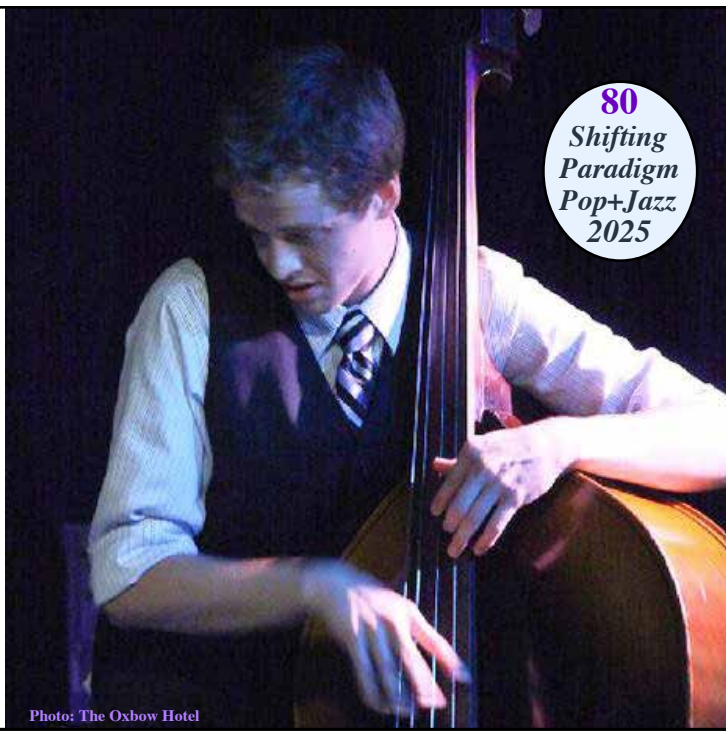
Contemporary Selections

ARTIST	Title	Label	X	T
ANUS KINGS	<u>Days of Rain</u>	<i>Hen House</i>	73	C ^P
KATHY INGRAHAM	<u>Jazz Dreams</u>	<i>Peirdon</i>	73	C ^b
MOSAIC	<u>Unfolding Tiles</u>	<i>Fuga Libera</i>	73	C ^P
OD BONGO	<u>Bongoville</u>	<i>Carton Records</i>	73	C ^A
JOE TAYLOR	<u>Last Boat Home</u>	<i>Moonwatcher</i>	73	C ^P
CAROLYN TROWBRIDGE	<u>Found Memories</u>	<i>Trowbridge Music</i>	73	C ^P
UMOJA	<u>Dance of the Kalahari</u>	<i>Umoja</i>	73	C ^P
SARAH WILSON	<u>Incandescence</u>	<i>Brass Tonic</i>	73	C ^P
ROBERT JON & THE WRECK	<u>Heartbreaks & Last Goodbyes</u>	<i>Journeyman</i>	69	C ^P
SHEILA DHAR	<u>North India</u>	<i>Ocora</i>	68	C ^b
KRIS DAVIS	<u>The Solastalgia Suite</u>	<i>Pyroclastic</i>	67	C ^P
SOFT MACHINE	<u>Thirteen</u>	<i>Dyad</i>	67	C ^F
CYGER & BUTTERWORTH	<u>Plaid Pants</u>	<i>Outrageous8</i>	66	C ^A
CLAIRE DICKSON	<u>Balance</u>	<i>New Amsterdam</i>	66	C ^b
IRREVERSIBLE ENTANGEMENTS	<u>Future Present Past</u>	<i>Impulse!</i>	63	C ^b

TED OLSEN

Violette

Bassist, composer, producer Ted Olsen leads the Violette Chamber Ensemble, with a fluid list of musicians. Vocals come from Aby Wolf and Eric Mayson in a jazzy contemporary set. We liked Wolf's performance on "Dusk" that contrasts with the introspective chamber pieces like "Present Tense. We enjoyed the refreshing "Intermezzo" and the relaxing finale "Abade", again featuring Wolf.



80
 Shifting
 Paradigm
 Pop+Jazz
 2025

Photo: The Oxbow Hotel

O's Place Legends

Master drummer Al Foster made a practice of spending his birthdays at Smoke Jazz Club, and this posthumous album captured the last of these celebrations on January 18-19, 2025.

We lost Al on May 28 of 2025 at 82 years old. But he was swinging to the end as evidenced by this live session with pianist Brad Mehldau, Joe Martin on bass, and saxophonist Chris Potter leading most melodies. It is a two-disc set with nine well-developed selections. "Amsterdam Blues", "Old Folks", "Pent-Up House", "Everything Happens To Me", and "Malinda" stand out in an engaging set.

80
Modern
Smoke Sessions
2026

AL FOSTER Live at Smalls

Earl Gibson III



Final Notes Rebecca Kilgore, a jazz vocalist died on January 7, 2026 from Lewy Body Dementia, she was 76. Richie Beirach, Pianist and Composer left us on January 26. The cause of death is undisclosed. He was 78 years old. Jazz Clarinetist and Saxophonist Ken Peplowski died on February 1, 2026. The cause of his death is undisclosed, he was 66. Composer and Arranger Robert Zieff died March 26, 2026 of natural causes. He was 98. The musical contributions of these fine jazz professionals will remain with us through their music forever.

Just In Time

LARRY WILLIS

83
Modern
Steeplechase
2026

The late pianist Larry Willis leads a trio with bassist Bob Crenshaw and drummer Kenny Washington, on Just In Time, originally released in 1989. It is a head bopper from the opening title track but also includes ballads like "Soul Search" and sizzlers like our favorites "Te Quiero Mi Hermano" and "One Finger Snap". Steeplechase re-released this recording honoring Willis and it is remarkably fresh 27 years later!



Photo: Jonathan Chimene

O's Place Features

Heirloom

Familiar Beginnings

Heirloom is a contemporary jazz-fusion quartet making their debut on Familiar Beginnings. There is light vocal shadowing by drummer, co-producer Hannah Johnson on “Eucalyptus Breeze”, enhancing the mellow mood of the band with saxophonist Sam Taylor, guitarist, co-producer Ben Dameron, and bassist Tim Ipsen. The theme is consistent and relaxing across nine selections. “Spice Trance”, “Fake Block”, and “Interlude” are other highlights.

Photo: Heirloom



76
*Shifting
Paradigm
Fusion
2026*

Oscar Peterson

Live at Baker's Keyboard Lounge

This is a pairing of the legendary jazz venue, the time is August 1960. Ray Brown and drummer

78
*Swing 2026
Verve*

legendary jazz pianist Oscar Peterson, with the Bakers Keyboard Lounge in Detroit, Michigan. Oscar is in rare form here, in a trio with bassist Ed Thigpen. This gem is only now being released (mid/April 2026) by Verve on CD, and as a 3-disc vinyl set! We sampled 3 songs and are amazed with the seamless performance. Stay tuned for a complete review.

Subscriptions to O's Place Jazz Magazine

Each subscription is 4 issues - send your check to:
P.O. BOX 38430, Charlotte, NC 28278

Just \$20/yr. Available on line at: www.OsPlaceJazz.com

- * Access to current and archived issues in PDF format
- * Ability to sort database of reviews
- * Quarterly issues as well as weekly updates to web site including live concert reviews and other special features.
- * Always concise advice at a fair price and no advertising!