



Published by: D. Oscar Grooms

\$15 Fall 2026, Issue 32.3

What's Inside!

	Page
Traditional Selections	3-6.
O's Big Band Picks	5.
O's Latin Features	7.
O's Trombone Features	8.
O's Piano Features	9-12.
O's Sax Features	13-17.
O's Drummer Features	18-19.
O's Vocal Features	20-26.
O's Bass Features	27.
O's Trumpet Features	28-29.
O's Guitarist Features	30-32.
Contemporary Selections	32-36.
O's Top-10 Scores	2.
O's Ratings System	2.
O's Place Jazz Ruler™	17.
O's HiFi Sound System	20.
Final Notes	37.
O's Jazz Legends	37.
Subscriptions	38.

O's Place Jazz Magazine

P.O. Box 38430
Charlotte, NC 28278

O'pening Notes

The summer is over, all to quickly for most of us but the cooler weather brings opportunities to relax around fire pits in the South and fireplaces in the North. There is nothing better than some great jazz to support that activity, alone or with loved ones and perhaps a beverage! We celebrate that experience with our Fall issue, packed with 123 new reviews over 38 pages, no ads.

There is a wealth of piano, sax, and vocal releases from seasoned and younger artists, with several debuts. There are also some older recordings that are being released for the first time in 2026.

There's a lot going on in the northwest specifically in Vancouver, Canada. You might've noticed many of the titles we review from Cellar Music. The man behind the label is producer, saxophonist, founder and owner, Cory Weeds. It started in the early 1990s with Weeds' Cellar Jazz Club. The club closed in 2014, but the magic continues as the volume and quality of jazz coming from

---> Sound advice at a nice price!

www.OsPlaceJazz.com

Opening Notes cont.

Cellar Music Group is noteworthy! Inside, you'll find 12 reviews from them. Wow!

With all the hype around AI and digitization, physical media is making a recovery. The growth rates for CD sales are 58.6% and 17.7% for vinyl for the 1st half of 2026 compared with 4.7% growth in streaming revenue during the same period. Streaming still commands the majority of the market at 82% of total recorded revenue. But yes, physical media is not yet dead.

I don't want to end with a bad note so I encourage you to **vote** to make a difference. Congressman John Conyers reflected on the intersection of music and politics in 1981 stating, "Politics is everybody's business, including people who dig great jazz." ...so, let's get engaged!

Cheers!

O&H

O'S TOP 10* SCORES

1. **LISA RICH** - [I Still Rise](#)
1. **VARIOUS** - [Accentuate The Positive](#)
3. **OSCAR LAVÈN** - [Elegant Calmity](#)
4. **Richard Baratta** - [Another Kind of Bird](#)
5. **BOBBY MATOS** - [La Peña](#)
5. **Helen Sung** - [Oracles](#)
6. **Amsterdam Klemzer Band** - [Diaspora](#)
6. **CONRAD HERWIG** - [The Latin Side of Chick Corea](#)
6. **NEW ENGLAND JAZZ COLLABORATIVE** - [Tributaries](#)

** This quarter we list the Top 9 vs. the standard Top 10 with 8 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

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>	<u>Top Traditional Picks</u> O's Notes
AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND <u>Diaspora</u> TC <i>Ashalt Tango 83</i>	The name of the band says it all. AKB is a Dutch, Jewish group playing modernized Yiddish and Klezmer music infused with elements of Gypsy, jazz and even hip-hop with 25 years of experience! The band is Jasper de Beer (b, g, banjo), Job Chajes (a-sax, Vocals), Mischa Porte (d), Joop van der Linden (tb), Janfie van Strien (cl), and Ellen van Vliet (Accordion). They vary the pace from ballads like “Grandma’s Dreidl” and “Firn Di Mekhutonim Aheym” to more prominent spirited tunes like “Everybody”, “Seba”, and “Hershfelds Bulgaria & Mekhutonim Tanz”.
JEFF COLELLA / PUTTER SMITH <u>Between Friends</u> <i>Capri TA 80</i>	This is a rare duo featuring pianist Jeff Colella and bassist Putter Smith. The recording <u>Between Friends</u> is a true partnership. There is nowhere to hide in this format, and both musicians sparkle in the spotlight, complimenting each other’s moves to our delight. The overall vibe is very relaxing, soothing, and enjoyable.
INCOMPARABLES TR <u>Stomp Your Stuff</u> <i>Turtle Bay 80</i>	Pianist Andrew Oliver and drummer Hal Smith lead the Incomparables, a septet with Colin Hancock (cornet/tb/reeds), T.J. Muller (cornet/tb/vocal), Andy Schumm (cl/cornet/sax), Jacob Alspach (banjo/g), and Dan Anderson (b/tuba). <u>Stomp Your Stuff</u> takes us back into the early 1920s with a swinging, ragtime album, à la Jellyroll Morton. It’s an accurate slice of jazz a hundred years ago!
MIKE JONES TS <u>with Strings</u> 75 <i>Capri</i>	<u>Mike Jones with Strings</u> is a tribute to the classic drummerless piano-jazz trios of the 40s-50s where a guitar replaces the traditional drums. The strings in the title are represented by bassist Alex Frank anchoring the beats, and guitarist Graham Dechter strumming rhythms and percussive strokes as well. The music swings hard à la Oscar Peterson across eight classics in front of a live audience at Vic’s, Las Vegas. You’ll tap your feet, bob your head and wish you were there! .
DANIEL PINILLA TB <u>Single-Handed</u> <i>Daniel Pinilla 75</i>	Colombian guitarist, composer Daniel Pinilla graduated from the University of North Texas and now teaches at the University of Michigan. He recently released a solo album titled <u>Single-Handed</u>. This effort displays the guitar as a complete instrument with Pinilla displaying his prowess over eight arrangements of classic tunes. Highlights are “Canto De Xango”, “Luiza”, and “Eronel”.
JIMBO ROSS TS <u>So Do It</u> 76 <i>Bodacious</i>	Jazz violinist Jimbo Ross has been entertaining audiences since the 1970s and he hasn’t missed a beat, including on his latest release <u>So Do It</u>. He leads a quintet with Joe Gaeta (g), Stuart Elster (p), Peter Marshall (b) and Ron Wagner (d). They swing across thirteen classic tunes recrafted for Ross. Highlights are “Unit 7”, “Speak Low”, “Canadian Sunset”, and “Willow Weep For Me”.

O's Place Features

Goldings, Bernstein & Stewart

This trio has been playing together since high school! 30 years later, B3 master Larry Goldings, guitarist Perter Bernstein, and drummer Bill Stewart share equal billing on Rhombus, another Smoke Sessions masterpiece. They've developed a cooperative confidence that allows for seamless interactions. "Hi Fly", "Dissipation Blues", the title track, and "In Walked Bud" are notable in the set of eight songs including one original each from Bernstein and Goldings.

80
Smoke Sessions
Modern 2026

Rhombus



Photo: John Rogers

Stephan Moccio

Canadian composer, producer,

74 Ballads
Decca 2026

reflects on his performances at the Four Seasons Hotel in Toronto early in the millennium. Scenes From A Velvet Room are the lobby lounge and the music sets a warm, inviting mood. Moccio is accompanied by notable saxophonist Branford Marsalis on "The Beautiful Undoing" and a couple others that resonated with us. We also enjoyed "Dear Burt", "Bossa Noir", and "Pink Lady" in a relaxing set.

Scenes From A Velvet Room

pianist, arranger, conductor Stephan Moccio

Stefon Harris

Vibraphonist, composer and producer Stefon Harris celebrates two decades with his band Blackout on Legacy Dances, a tribute to the late electro-soul-jazz visionary Casey Benjamin, a former Blackout member. Harris (vibraphone, marimba) is joined by Christian Sands (keyboards), Dezron Douglas (b), and Terreon Gully (d). Special guests Braimah "Weedie" Morris (djembe), Anne Drummond (fl), and Oran Etkin (cl) add spice to the mix! Casey Benjamin (sax, aerophone, vocoder) is featured posthumously on "I Know Love" and "What a Wonderful World". We liked the cool vibe on "A Radical's Love", "Ell's Boogie", and "We Are An African People" featuring Dwayne Clark on the mic.

Legacy Dances

Photo: Siebe van Ineveld Rotterdam

77
Motéma
Modern
2026



Big Band Picks O's Notes

ARTIST
Title
Label **Rating**

HELEN SUNG
Oracles **T^N**
Sunnyside **84**

Pianist and composer Helen Sung assembles her first big band for her latest album. They perform a dozen selections with eight specially designed as odes to master artists, the Oracles. They open, cooking on “Convergence”, and move on to a strong program with “Wayne’s World” for Shorter, “A Little Bird Watchin’” for Jimmy Heath, the laid back, cool “Pianism I-III” dedicated to Barry Harris, Kenny Barron, and Herbie Hancock respectively, before wrapping up with “Peace”, a suitable call for harmony.

NEW ENGLAND
JAZZ **T^N**
COLLABORATIVE
Tributaries
NEJC **83**

The New England Jazz Collaborative is a non-profit, artist run, collective dedicated to promoting and producing fresh jazz. The music is engaging, vibrant, and easy to absorb. Tributaries opens with “Another Brighter Day” by Jeremy Cohen (perc), moving to the spirited conversation of Mayan Rubinstein’s (p) “Ol’ Liminal”. We also enjoyed the suspense of Darryl Harper’s (cl) “The Secret”, and wrapping up with a little calypso on “Green Turtle Strut” by Cohen.

IRA B. LISS **T^N**
Unexpected
Guests
Big Band Jazz
Machine **79**

Ira B. Liss leads his big band Jazz Machine for their seventh album Unexpected Guests. He collaborates on writing and arrangements with Dan Radlauer. As the title suggests, each song features a different lead soloist. Vince Gill sings “I’m Counting On You”, mandolinist Eva Scow shines on “San Joaquin”, the funky “Tapped Out” features rapper, tapper Leo Manzari, “Strings In The Wind” features Tina Guo (cello) & Greg Armstrong (fl), and violinist Nora German chops it up on “Violinspiration”! The variety is appealing, and backed by the tamed but powerful big band, this is certainly one of the best from Liss!

SMITHSONIAN
JAZZ **T^N**
Ellington
Masterworks
MCG Jazz **78**

The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra is the national jazz orchestra of the USA based at the Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. Their latest release focuses on the works of Duke Ellington from 1940 through the mid-1960s. We liked the soft approach of “Race” & “Oclupaca”, the energetic “Madness In Great Ones”, and “Ad Lib on Nippon”.

ORQUESTRA **T^N**
FILMARMONICA
Jazz Sinfonico
Mixicano
Musica **76**

Orquestra Filarmonica is a nonprofit, Brazilian Philharmonic Orchestra from Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais. They have been performing since 2008 and serve as a breeding ground for local musicians as well as entertainment for a broad audience. The mission is to develop and appreciation, awareness and education of classical music. The music is not the samba or bossa nova that we’ve typically associated with Brazil, but a true classical expression. The band is dynamic and powerful while being delicate and peaceful where required drawing listeners in!

Traditional Selections

ARTIST	Title	Label	X	T
BRUCE GERTZ	<u>Octopus Dreams</u>	<i>Open Mind</i>	73	T ^B
JIMMY LAYTON	<u>Sonoma Beach</u>	<i>Jazzapple</i>	73	T ^L
TAKASHI MATSUNAGA	<u>Ride Five</u>	<i>Ride Five</i>	73	T ^b
JIM SELF	<u>My America 3</u>	<i>Bassett Hound</i>	73	T ^N
ADA BIRD WOLFE	<u>Murmuration</u>	<i>A Nirdie & Shakamolfe</i>	73	T ^b
SARAH PILLOW	<u>Wanderer</u>	<i>Buckyball</i>	72	T ^b
SUZANNE PITTSON/BEVAN MANSON	<u>Conversations</u>	<i>Vineland</i>	72	T ^b
ROBYN SPANGLER	<u>The John Beasley Project</u>	<i>WIIFM</i>	72	T ^b
EVA CORTES	<u>La Malinche</u>	<i>Blue Flem</i>	71	T ^b
TODD ZIMBERG	<u>Not A Tango</u>	<i>Todd Zimberg</i>	71	T ^B
L.A. IMPROVISATION ENSEMBLE	<u>Insubordinate Lunar Transgressions</u>	<i>Denouement</i>	69	T ^N
RYAN BARRY	<u>If I Did Not Speak Out</u>	<i>G2 Records</i>	66	T ^B
MARIE-PAULE FRANKE	<u>Through The Cracks The Light Is Born</u>	<i>MariPosa</i>	66	T ^b

Charles Chen

The Long Way Home

The latest release for pianist Charles Chen is in a quartet with 98-year-old bassist Bill Crow, guitarist Felix Lemerle, and 91-year-old Steve Little on drums. Felix and Charles are at least fifty years younger than their band mates, but they bridge the generations to make The Long Way Home an enjoyable experience. The liner notes were informative, and fun to read, describing the musicians and the music, both entertaining! On top of that, there are interviews with Bill and Steve punctuating the music.

75
Cellar Music
Modern
2026



Photo: Kaori Suzuki

www.OsPlaceJazz.com

O's Latin Features

Donald Vega

Play It Forward

78
Latin
Imagery
2026

Photo: Shervin Lainez



Pianist Donald Vega leads his Latin jazz sextet with Carly Maldonado (perc), Raul Reyes (b), Pete Van Nostrand (d), Brandon Lee (t), and David DeJesus (sax). They serve up an energetic set of ten songs on Play It Forward, Vega's gratitude for the mentorship's that helped shape his life and music. We liked the mid-tempo tunes like "La Flor", "Smilin' Billy", & "Into The Unknown", ballads like "Habla Conmigo", and upbeat swingers like "McKibbon's Bugalu". It's enjoyable, fresh and on point!

Christopher Sanchez

75 Ballads
Zoho 2026

Latin Jazz Meets Opera

Dominican Baritone vocalist Christopher Sanchez expands musical genres with his recording debut, Latin Jazz Meets Opera. He resides in New York where he blends classical arias with Caribbean rhythms and Latin jazz. Jazmine Saunders adds her bright soprano vocals to three selections notably "Carmen's Habanera". This is a creative work that truly blends genres.

JUAN CARLOS QUINTERO

The Story of Love

Photo: Cameron Dunbar

78
Moondo
Latin
2026



Colombian guitarist, producer Juan Carlos Quintero leads his quintet with Eddie Resto (b), Joe Rotondi (p), Joey DeLeon (perc), and Aaron Serfaty (d) for his latest album The Story of Love. He freshens Latin classics from his parent's collection overlaying his signature and bringing them into today's modern jazz world. Guest veterans Justo Almario (fl, cl) and Luis Conte (perc) add special touches. They open with a taste of calypso on "Poodle Mambo", transforming classics like "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise", "Poinciana", "Corcovado", and "Tres Palabras". Quintero's liquid guitar work encourages listeners to dance and smile in a session that is more than a collection of covers. It felt so good that he added five more tracks to create a Deluxe Edition arriving this fall.

O's Trombone Features

The Latin Side of Chick Corea

CONRAD HERWIG

Trombonist Conrad Herwig pays homage to the great pianist Chick Corea, specifically The Latin Side of Chick Corea with ten interpretations of songs composed and/or performed by Chick. The horns: Craig Handy (sax, fl), Alex Norris (t, flugelhorn), and Herwig give this recording bright energy. The world class rhythm section, Bill O'Connell (p), Ruben Gonzalez (b), Robby Ameen (d), and Mauricio Herrera (congas). "500 Miles High", "Humpty Dumpty", "Windows", and "Spain" were our favorites.

83
Savant
Latin
2026

Las Vegas Boneheads

The Las Vegas Boneheads (LVB) follow

2026 Big Band
Curt Miller 74

Stretchin' Out

their well-received Sixty and Still Cookin' with Stretchin' Out, another strong effort. This one is focused on the arrangements of the late Dick "Stretch" McQuary, composer, bass trombonist, and one of the original members of LVB. He was a prominent big band arranger in the 1970s. These arrangements have stood the test of time and Curt Miller's trombone heavy nonet does them justice.

ELI HOWELL

Steps Taken

79
D Clef
Modern
2026

Trombonist Eli Howell emerges from Michigan State University with his debut record Steps Taken. The core band is Sharel Cassity (sax), Xavier Davis (p), Rodney Whitaker (b), Ulysses Owens Jr (d), and Brian Lynch (t). Guest trombonist Wycliffe Gordon shines on "I Remember Al". "A Clear Sky" features Thomas Noble (sax), Miki Hayama (p), Langston Kitchens (b) and Coleen Clark (d). We also enjoyed "One For Steve", the fresh take on "Alone Together", and "Reimagined".



Photo: International Trombone Association

O's Piano Features

Kelly Green

Eat Your Greens

82
Ballads
La Reserve
2026



Photo: Kelly Green

Pianist, vocalist, composer Kelly Green is a true entertainer who personalizes each song. She engages a fine band including Wycliffe Gordon (tb, vocals), Wallace Roney, Jr. (t), Luca Soul Rosenfeld (b) and Evan Hyde (d) to make *Eat Your Greens* a standout recording, one that's easily embraced by the audience. The arrangements of classic tunes on this album are good with great phrasing and a refreshing spirit that makes them sizzle like they were brand new. Examples are "The Very Thought of You", "Tongue Twister", "When You're Smilin'", and "Solitude".

Amanda Tosoff

Pop+Jazz 2026
Cellar Music 74

Where The Joy Is

Canadian pianist, composer, Amanda Tosoff just released *Where The Joy Is*, a pleasant album including vocals from Emilie-Claire Barlow. It is the third chapter of her Words Project, merging poetry, art-song and jazz. She is inspired by Barlow and her band, true friends, Allison Au (sax), Jon Maharaj (b), and Morgan Childs (d). We enjoyed "Little One", "This Time The Dream's On Me", and "Where the Joy Is". Thankfully Tosoff has reconnected with her love of music and life, and perhaps another chapter in the Words Project.

Photo: Kemuel Roig

Kemuel Roig

Both Sides Now

75
Ballads
Life In
2026



Jazz pianist Kemuel Roig goes solo for his latest release, *Both Sides Now*, a collection of a dozen reimagined classics, all focused on love. "The Peacocks", "Besame Mucho", "Contigo Aprendi", and "Windmills of Your Mind" are highlights in a set that soothes subtlety, touching several emotions along the way. He plays the songs by feel rather than the prescribed tempo to capture distinct nuance and character of the lyrics. You can't escape from his prowess, but the focus is more on musicality, and it resonates well! The music is supported by excellent liner notes.

O's Piano Features

Randy Ingram

Sound Within

Jazz pianist Randy Ingram leads a polished trio with bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Joe La Barbera. *Sound Within* is a celebration of the music of the legendary Bill Evans. The music includes two Evans originals, three Ingram originals, and four songs that were in Evans' regular rotation. This beautiful recording is inspired by Evans, as opposed to an imitating him. Fortunately, each of these musicians have strong voices of their own combining to make this a fresh, enjoyable session. "Ezz-Thetic", "My Foolish Heart", "Remembrance" and the title track are highlights in a soothing session.

82
Chill Tone
Modern
2026

Photo: Randy Ingram



Zaccai Curtis

2026 Modern
TRR Music 74

Sonoluminescence

Puerto Rican, jazz keyboardist, composer Zaccai Curtis plays a blend of Afro-Caribbean rhythms in a sophisticated jazz fusion on *Sonoluminescence*, his latest release. Curtis shares the stage with talented musicians and gives each of them a chance to shine. The core band is Zaccai (keys, vocals), Craig Handy (t-sax, fl), Joe Dyson (d), Brevan Hampden (congas, perc), with bass duty split between Luques Curtis and Mike Boone. Aurelien Budynek (g) brings a taste of fusion to the mix on "Message". We enjoyed the punctuation on "Last Call" and the mellow "I Want To Feel The Way You Move", the title track featuring singer Julie Acosta, and the cool vibe on "Wellspring".

Colin Heshmat

Elastic Groove

Colin Heshmat is a New York City based jazz pianist and composer. He studied both engineering and music at the University of Illinois, finally leaning towards music for a career. *Elastic Groove* is his debut album including eight originals. He leads a quartet with Ryo Sasaki (t), Yuma Takagi (b), and Ben Cliness (d). We welcomed Sasaki's warm tones on "Sea Breeze", and the suspense of "Centre Street Theme I". We also enjoyed Heshmat rolling on "Ember", the cool covers of "Just Friends", "Cantaloupe Island", and the title track.

78
C Heshmat
Bebop
2026

Photo: Christopher Kayfield



O's Piano Features

Sharon Minemoto

Goodbye Strawberry Hill

Japanese, Canadian pianist Sharon Minemoto leads a quartet with Saxophonist Jon Bentley (sax), Darren Radtke (b) and Bernie Aria (d, hotchiku). Goodbye Strawberry Hill is all original music inspired by Minemoto's family experiences, both jovial and tragic from WWII to today. There is an abundance of passion on songs like "Eulogy", "No Way Out", "Captive Voyage", and "An Ocean Between Us".

Photo: Robyn Ardagh



82
Cellar Music
Modern
2026

Udeigwe

While many people are aware of **75 LU Factors 2026 Pop+Jazz** the connection between music and mathematics, Nigerian Professor Lawrence Udeigwe practices in both arenas. His latest recording, Four Lemmas is organized around mathematical structures: orthogonality, sparse matrix, local maximum, and stable equilibrium, but he doesn't forget the funk! The band is Udeigwe (p, vocals), Steph Clement (t), Wayne Tucker (t), Rade Bema (b) and Josh Green (d). There are eight original songs. Our favorites are "Lemma III: Local Maximum", "Corollary III: Pose FM", and "Lemma IV: Stable Equilibrium". Don't worry about the theorems, enjoy the music!

Four Lemmas

Chris Hazelton

In Rotation

79
Cellar Live
Modern
2026

B3 master Chris Hazelton resides in Kansas City where he teaches at KCCC. In Rotation is his latest recording in a quartet with Brett Jackson (sax), Peter Schlamb (vibes), and John Kizilarmut (d). These guys light up the KC jazz scene regularly and expand their reach with this album. We liked "Paris of the Plains", "First Snow", "Brisk Breeze Through the Trees", and the warm "Summer In Central Park". It is a very accessible session.



Photo: Facebook=k

O's Piano Features

Antonio Adolfo

This is a relaxing set from Brazilian pianist, Balaio are the baskets that African Brazilian

82
Latin
AAM
2026

Balaio

Antonio Adolfo on Balaio, women use to carry goods on their heads with items carefully placed inside. Similarly, Adolfo selects the songs for this outing from across his career that are balanced for this effort. The band is a large ensemble performing beautiful instrumentals. Highlights are “Sambalaio”, “Claudia” featuring guest guitarist Thom Rotella, “Zach Toom Toom”, “San Expedito”, and the relaxed “My Chant” with guest Leo Gandelman (a-sax).

Photo: Paul Constantinides

Yoko Miwa & Mikayla Shirley

The Midnight Hour

Pianist, composer and producer Yoko

Miwa forms a duet with vocalist Mikayla Shirley. Both artists are talented, but they stick to a tried-and-true songbook, leading to a good club set with a conservative approach. Highlights are “Tenderly”, “I Loves You, Porgy”, “Love Dance”, and “Too Late Now”.

Cupcakes & Muffins
2026 Ballads 76

Steve Rawlins

Word On The Street

Steve Rawlins is a pianist, composer, arranger, musical director, and author. He takes the lead on Word On The Street, his latest release. He has a strong band with Sal Lozano (sax, fl), Grant Geissman (g), Ken Wild (b), Hussain Jiffry (elec b), and John Ferraro (d). We liked the freshness of “Friday Night” featuring Geissman and Lorenzo, the cool “Moraga Drive” & “The Knuckleball”, “Come With Me The Brazil”, and the warmth of “Reach Out”. The lone vocal track is “It’s Cool” with Rawlings’ daughters Marisa Bradfield and Victoria Rawlins, along with his former wife Isela Sotelo singing. The session culminates with a beautiful solo piano effort on “Let’s Get Lost”. It balanced and

81
Fusion
S Rawlins
2026

Photo: Steve Rawlins

O's Sax Features

Photo: Oscar Lavèn



Oscar Lavèn

88
Bebop
Thick
2026

Elegant Calamity

Woodwind specialist Oscar Lavèn resides in New Zealand and serves up a definitive mix of traditional jazz on Elegant Calamity. The percussion on “Dizzy Campaign” imparts a big band Latin feel, a vibe that continues through the session. We enjoyed the passion of “Butterfly”, “Pharoah Blue” - with an excellent sax intro, “Cloud Serendipity”, and the exotic pulse of “Tall Poppy Stomp”.

David Borgo

74 *Borgoriginals*
Fusion 2026

Panta Rhei

Jazz saxophonist David Borgo leads a quartet with Josh Nelson (p), Luca Alemanno (b), and Dan Schnelle (d) for his latest album. Panta Rhei is true to its title meaning, everything flows. We liked the swinging “Mid Evil” featuring solos from Borgo and Nelson, “Flow”, “Paro”, the Latin tinged “Malaga”, and the title track in this energetic set of Borgo originals.

Steve Rosenbloom

San Francisco 1948

Canadian composer Steve Rosenbloom accumulated some of his best work over the past 30+ years for his current album San Francisco 1948. The musicians are a polished, Montreal-based, 17-piece big band. The arrangers are trombonist Chris Smith (the older tunes), and tenor saxophonist Michael Johancsik for the four recent compositions. We enjoyed the vibe of “In a Boppish Sort of Way” featuring Johancsik and Cameron Milligan (t), the gentle sway of “Mosley”, the somewhat melancholic title track, and the upbeat Latin tunes.

76
Big Band
Musique Glory
2025

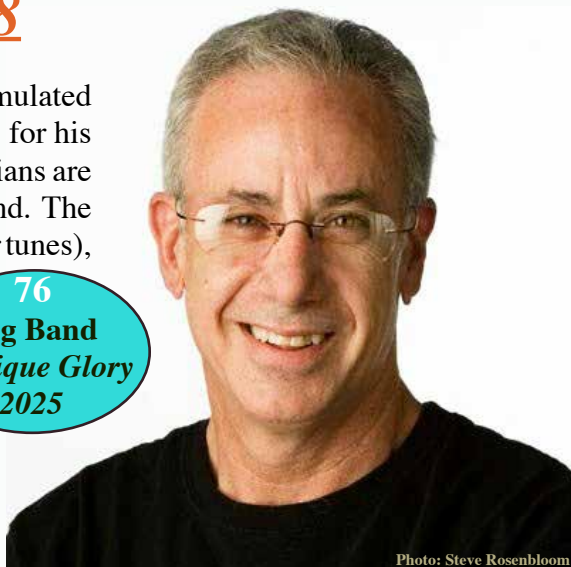


Photo: Steve Rosenbloom

O's Sax Features

Bruce Williams

Solid Perspective

Saxophonist, composer, and educator Bruce Williams is a teacher who can play VERY well! He leads a band with Brandon McCune (p), Lonnie Plaxico (b), and Willie Jones III (d) on his latest album Solid Perspective. They open with a soulful cover of “Every Time We Say Goodbye”, and progress through eight selections. Other highlights are the warm “Short Lived Dream” the bubbly “Sense Out Madness” and “Why Can’t We” featuring Williams on the microphone.

81
Fusion
2026
WJ3



Photo: Steve Wilson

Matt Otto

Fusion 2026
Matt Otto 75

Ephemeral

Saxophonist, composer Matt Otto is also a Professor of Jazz Studies at Kansas University. Ephemeral is his latest album with all original compositions and a talented team of 15 musicians, generally playing as a 4–5-piece ensemble. All our memories, regardless of the emotions attached, last only for a moment. They are ephemeral, and the music on this CD is reflective of those moments. We like the upbeat, positive remembrances illustrated by “Dune Town Mastered”, “Scroll”, and the title track

77
Modern
GroundTone
2026

Pentland Bergonzi Quartet

Windward

The Pentland Bergonzi Quartet features leaded, bassist, composer Sean Pentland and tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi with Julian Shore (p) and Jongkuk “JK” Kim (d). Windward is dedicated to their late friend and collaborator Sebastian Nay. The seasoned saxophonist blends well with the younger musicians on this neo-bop session, all written by Pentland except for Coltrane’s “Countdown”. We welcome the fresh music especially “Claudia”, the bubbly “Beantown Blues”, and “The Magus”.



Photo: Pentland Bergonzi Quartet

O's Sax Features

Seamus Blake

EH!

79
R&B+Jazz
Cellar Music
2026

Saxophonist Seamus Blake presents a tribute to the legendary Eddie Harris on EH! Blake also plays the EWI and adds effects with a band that includes Sam Yahel (keyboards), Tim Lefebvre (b), and Corey Fonville (d). They turn up the heat on “Listen Up”. Guest vocalist Dawn Pemberton shines on “Compared to What”, “EH Medley” around cooler jams like “Illusionary Dreams”. Producer Cory Weeds corals the team for a spicy set that has contemporary jazz elements from cities around the world.



Photo: Seamus Blake

Mike DiRibbo

75 **Cellar Jazz**
2026 **Fusion**

Way Out Northwest

Alto saxophonist Mike DiRibbo's Way Out Northwest was recorded with a Vancouver-based band including Tilden Webb (p), Jodi Proznick (b), and Jesse Cahill (d). The music is mostly DiRibbo originals that illustrate the strong connection between the musicians. Each of them shines across the eight compositions. This album supports a continued pool of evidence that left coast jazz is centered in the northwest, specifically Vancouver Canada.

77
Modern
Cellar Music
2026



Photo: Ardeshir

Introducing... Ardeshir

Iranian saxophonist, composer, educator Ardeshir Pourkeramati moved to Vancouver at 11 where he resides today. Along the way he was decorated with a Doctor of Musical Arts from USC. He performs locally and surrounds himself with a fine band on his debut album, introducing... Ardeshir. Julian Borkowski (t), Winston Matsushita (p), Davis Caballero (b), and Graham Vilette (d) are the core musicians. He composed five of the selections to go with seven freshly arranged classics. They all swing, notably “Blues Up And Down” including co-producer Cory Weeds (t-sax). We also enjoyed the passion on “Darn That Dream”, and the mystery of “Midnight Paradox”.

O's Sax Features

Photo: Wikioedia, Blue Lamp

79
Modern
Cellar Music
2026

Jessie Davis Reflections

Alto saxophonist Jesse Davis is from New Orleans but makes his home in Italy where he's lived for two decades! If you don't know him, Reflections is a good way to become acquainted. He leads an all-star crew with Spike Wilner (p), John Webber (b), and Lewis Nash (d). They open with "Blue Autumn", giving us a taste of each musician in a shared spotlight that extends throughout the session. The blues swag of "Choctaw Alley" feels just right. Davis is passionate on his horn with a definitive expression that defines the moods. We tapped our feet to "Funk Sugo" and found ourselves smiling on the rest!

Paul Carlon

Truth Revolution
2026 Latin 75

Between Us Three

Saxophonist, composer Paul Carlon formed a cordless trio in 2015 with conguero Wilson "Chembo" Corniel and bassist Alex Ayala. They were initially put together for a brunch gig in Manhattan and now are set to release the second recording Between Us Three. The music is based on classic jazz improvisations with a large dose of Cuban/Puerto Rican rhythms. They open, with a little calypso on "Anabacoa", there's fine bass work on "Espejos" and "Papasito Rides Again". Elsewhere, they all stand tall, notably on "Infant Eues" and "That Trio Vibe".

Euge Groove

The Phoenix

79
funky jazz
Shanachie
2026

The Phoenix marks the return for smooth, jazz, saxophonist Euge Groove after several years away from the scene due to heart health. We're glad he's back, and back with a vengeance, bringing the same warm sounds that keep him in the hearts of many contemporary jazz fans. The title track is a sizzler, contrasting with warm ballads like "Those Nights Alone" and "At Peace". We also enjoyed "Odysseus" and "Better Days". Groove brings fresh sounds like he never missed a beat! Welcome back!



Photo: Euge Groove

O's Sax Features

Keith Oxman



Photo: Daniel James

81
Fusion
Palmetto
2026

Home

Veteran saxophonist, composer Keith Oxman presents a relaxing, polished collection of thirteen original tunes that are all easily embraceable on Home. He gets support from Derek Banach(t), Clint Dadian (g), Bill McGrossen (b), and Todd Reid (d). As the set unfolds, we get a clear picture of Oxman, the man and his evolution to date including bookends dedicated to his parents, "True Lou" (dad) and "An Extraordinary Rose" (mom). In between are tributes to friends, family, and influencers.

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

LehCats

Live @ The Breakroom

Karen Stachel plays flutes and sings with co-leader Norbert playing sax and flutes. Their rhythm section is Matt Clark (p), Dan Feiszli (b), and Dan Gonzalez (d), with guest percussionist Giovanni Hidalgo. The music was composed by the leaders. The groove on LehCats is fresh, funky and relevant right out of my gate with "Step On It". This is a live session recorded at The Breakroom in San Jose, CA, October 18, 2024. Karen sings on "Sunshine", There are also videos on the 2-disc set. Other notable songs are "Mandela" and "Power Tap".



75
Pop+Jazz
Purple Room
2026

O's Drummer Features

Richard Baratta *Another Kind of Bird*

Photo: Spotify



87
Latin
Savant
2026

Drummer, bandleader Richard Baratta looks back at Charlie Parker on *Another Kind of Bird*. The band is top notch featuring arranger Bill O'Connell (p), Vincent Herring (sax), Paul Bollenback (g), Michael Goetz (b), and Paul Rossman (perc). Guest saxophonists Eric Alexander, Abraham Burton, and Craig Handy help bring the spirit of "Bird" back to life. Rich ballads like "Embraceable You" surround the popular burners "Yardbird Suite", "Segment", and "Donna Lee". There's a taste of Latin on "Little Suede Shoes", and a sax attack on the fusion-laced "Ah-Leu-Cha". This is a fine session on all accounts!

Tom Teasley

74 funky jazz
Tomism 2026

Inner Play

InnerPlay is a spirited collaboration between drummer, percussionist Tom Teasley and trumpeter Dave Dallou. Both artists are adept at improvising and Teasley adds electronics into the mix to add more contemporary flare. They play in the moment with a minimum of overdubs. "Elephant Dance", "Inner Joy", and "Outside Inn" are among the best of a dozen selections. They are a creative, unique duo.

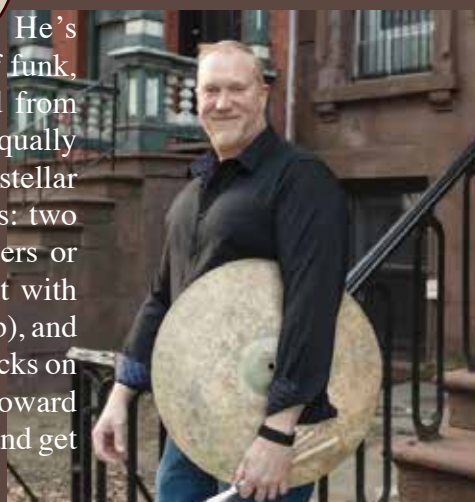
Beyond The Veil

Drummer, composer Jason Kruk started on sax before finding his true calling on the drums. a man who defies genres incorporating elements of funk, rock, R&B, and jazz in his playbook. He's recovered from drugs and homelessness to find a purpose in religion. Equally important he's evolved as a man, husband, father and stellar band leader. For *Beyond The Veil*, Kruk leads 3 bands: two trios with bassist Fima Ephron and either Adam Rogers or Wayne Krantz playing guitar. The 3rd unit is a quintet with Bob Lanzetti (g), Brian Donohoe (t-sax), Mike League (b), and Art Hirahara (p). Kruk composed all the music, and it rocks on "The Eagle" and "The Man" with Krantz. They lean toward peaceful fusion on "Dad", energetic fusion on "Wind", and get funky on "Awakening" and "The Lion".

75
Fusion
SunGoose
2026

Jason Kruk

Photo: Laura Merrill Images



O's Drummer Features

Photo: John Kelly



Mike Clark Kuon Ganjo

79
Modern
Wide Hive
2026

Drummer Mike Clark leads a band with Eddie Henderson (t), Patrice Rushen (p), Essiet Okon Essiet (b), and Craig Handy (b) for Kuon Ganjo, (a Buddhist term meaning Time Without Beginning). This is Clark's third album on Wide Hive Records, a swinging set of eight updated classic tunes along with Clark's title track. We enjoyed "Austin City Shuffle", "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise", and the fleeting "Lungs".

Yoron Israel

74 Modern 2026
Ronja Music

Inspiration

Drummer, percussionist and vibraphonist Yoron Israel leads a fine band with Laszlo Gardony (p), Avery Sharpe (b), Ian Buss (sax), Rick Peckham (g), and Dennis Montgomery (B3). Inspiration leans towards spirituality and jazz with a message. Vocalist Leah Hinton sings on several selections notably "It's All About You Lord". Our favorites are "Black Scholars" and the strong instrumental support on "Mirror Mirror/Man In The Mirror", "A Brand New Joy", "The Island", and "You're My Alter Ego".

Chris Wabich 1978 (steep)

76
Fusion
Wabich
2026

Drummer Chris Wabich leads a trio with pianist Josh Nelson and bassist Adam Lutz on 1978 (steep), with six original compositions. We like the soft approach of "Ruby On The Old Street" featuring Nelson, "Ancient Lake", and "Magitama". The entire set is relaxing, with a mild, warm fusion that bathes listeners in encouragement. The title comes from a Taiwanese tea that was made in 1978 from a tree over 100 years old. Wabich was consuming the last of his tea while composing the album, hence the connection. We suggest you enjoy this album with your favorite tea!

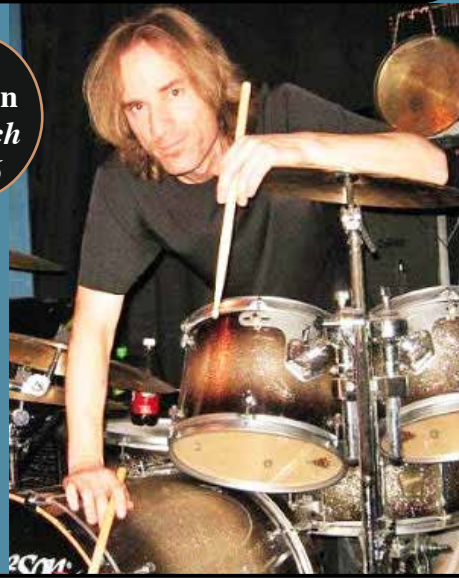


Photo: JazzMusic

O's Vocal Features

Gergana Velinova

74 *Cellar Music*
Ballads 2026

Free

Bulgarian Canadian jazz vocalist, composer, and poet Gergana Velinova resides in Vancouver and performs globally. *Free* is her latest album inspired by her new Canadian citizenship. Gergana gets support from fine musicians with a core rhythm section including Kristian Alexandrov (keyboards, perc), Joel Fountain (d) and either Peter Slavov, Miles Hills or MoJo Jones on bass. Her music is slanted towards the contemporary side on tunes like “A Song About Stones”. Vince Mai (t) provides muted accents on “Orange Moon”. There’s a taste of bossa nova on “If You Knew” and lazy sax from Cory Weeds on “Keep Walking”. It’s a good set with lots of variety.

89
Ballads
Tritone
2026

Lisa Rich



Photo: Lisa Rich

I Still Rise

Jazz vocalist Lisa Rich has withstood many obstacles including vocal atrophy, but she’s not only bounced back but sounds as good as ever. *I Still Rise* is a statement of resilience. Her accompaniment is minimal (mostly duets and trios), but strong featuring pianist Marc Copland, bassist Drew Gress and trumpeter Dave Ballou. The songs are a combination of freshened classics that are passionate, relevant and meaningful. Among the best are “Beginner/How Can We Sing About Freedom?”, “Èstate”, “Ancient Footprints” with Ballou, and “No Moon At All” featuring Gress. Rich delivers a stunning performance!

O's primary listening is done with a Sony XA777ES SACD player, Ayre C5-xc^{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 ReferencePower 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

SYLVIA BROOKS

Soliloquy

Soliloquy is the sixth album for vocalist, composer Sylvia Brooks and another collaboration with arranger, pianist Christian Jacobs. The rest of the incredible band is Farzin Farhadi (sax), Grant Geissman (g), Kevin Axt (b) and Kevin Winard (d). We were touched by the story behind “Lizzie’s Dance” inspired by a young dancer with Down Syndrome confidently expressing herself at a recital. The warmth in Brooks voice resonates on “Soul Eyes”, opening a set of eight gems. Among the best are “Talks a Good Game”, a cover of “Fragile”, “Instinct of Love”, and “Temptation”.



Photo: Antoine Reekmans

82
Ballads
S.Brooks
2026

Gergana Velinova

74 *Cellar Music*
2026 Ballads

Free

Bulgarian Canadian jazz vocalist, composer, and poet Gergana Velinova resides in Vancouver and performs globally. Free is her latest album inspired by her new Canadian citizenship. Gergana gets support from fine musicians with a core rhythm section including Kristian Alexandrov (keyboards, perc), Joel Fountain (d) and either Peter Slavov, Miles Hills or MoJo Jones on bass. Her music is slanted towards the contemporary side on tunes like “A Song About Stones”. Vince Mai (t) provides muted accents on “Orange Moon”. There’s a taste of bossa nova on “If You Knew” and lazy sax from Cory Weeds on “Keep Walking”. It’s a good set with lots of variety.



77
Ballads
Edition
2026

GRETCHEN PARLATO

The Wise Ones

Gretchen returns to the recording scene after more than a decade away, with a reflective, contemporary vocal album. The Wise Ones includes a strong musical cast including Robert Glasper (keyboards), Gerald Clayton (keyboards), Mark Guiliana (d), and Alan Hampton (b, g, vocals). “Rainbow”, “In My Bed”, “Landslide”, “It’s You”, “Block The Sun”, and the romantic title track are highlights in an airy relaxed session.

Photo: Mike Quain

O's Vocal Features



LIZ CRACCHIOLO

82

Pacific Coast
Ballads
2026

I'm A Woman

I'm A Woman is the powerhouse debut from vocalist Liz Cracchiolo. It's a coming out session with Liz expressing herself through these jazz, pop and blues classics. She shines on freshened arrangements of "I'm Beginning to See The Light" with Jonathan Michel (b) & Benny Benack III (t, vocals), "These Boots Were Made For Walkin'", and "Fever", a duet with bassist Russell Hall. She swings on "Tainted Love" and stirs up the blues closing on the title track!

Photo: Liz Cracchiolo

Pharoah's Daughter

Songs of Desire

76

Ballads
Tzadik
2026

Pharaoh's Daughter was formed in 1995 and led by vocalist Basya Schechter. Songs of Desire is a blend of traditional Jewish lyrics with Mid-Eastern instrumentation, and multilingual vocals. It is dedicated to the late orchestrator Jasmshied Sharifi. It is a cool, relaxing world music composed mostly by Schechter. The exotic, tropical, vocal tracks like "Yonati", "Asleep", "Shepherd Song" and "Better Than Wine" are highlights of the dozen selections.



Photo: Basya Schechter

O's Vocal Features

Michelle Lordi & Mathew Parrish

Live at Dirty Dog



Photo: Jared Gruenwald, Left Eye Studios

81
Ballads
Bump Jazz
2026

The headliners are vocalist Michelle Lordi and bassist Matthew Parrish. They get support from guitarist Randy Napoleon and pianist Xavier Davis for their latest album recorded Live at Dirty Dog Café in Detroit. Lordi and Parrish display rich tones during this intimate set, especially on “I Will Wait For You”, “Close Your Eyes”, and with the Brazilian twist of “No More Blues”. There are six selections and they all shine, giving us a thirst for the next chapter.

Judy Whitmore

75 Ballads 2026
Arden House

This Is Home

Vocalist Judy Whitmore celebrates on This Is Home, a 19-minute collection of six selections. The orchestra is produced, arranged, and conducted by Chris Walden. The country she describes is sadly unfolding as hate, greed, and a discard for respecting the fruited plains. Perhaps the heartfelt vision she describes can fuel like-minded Americans to reclaim our founding principles.

Nigerian jazz vocalist Douyé Doubara Bella Youduba, or simply Douye has recorded both R&B and jazz albums, shifting to the latter on her last few releases including her latest, Stay With Me. The Los Angeles resident is well articulated with soft, deep tones. She plays ten classic selections with several variations of a strong band including co-producer George Cables (p), Sean Conly (b), Jerome Jennings (d), and Craig Handy (sax). There are also three original songs, collaborations with Rufus Bordial. The band for these tunes is arranger Mina Choi (p), Edwin Livingston (b), Clayton Cameron (d), Barclay Moffitt (sax), and Kye Palmer (t). The program is well integrated and pleasing.

Douyé

Stay With Me

80
R&B+Jazz
Groove Note
2026



Photo: Douyé

O's Vocal Features

Hannah Gill

I Like The Sunrise



78
Ballads
Turtle Bay
2026

Photo: Hannah Gill

Vocalist Hannah Gill gets off of the Spooky Volumes and gives us a more personal, intimate set on *I Like The Sunrise*. There are eleven Ellington-inspired tunes delivered by a supporting band with Luis Salcedo (g), Ricky Alexander (sax), Phil Ambuel (b), and Adam Ray (d). We liked the southern bluesy feel of “I’m Just A Lucky So-and-So” and “I Ain’t Got Nothing But The Blues”. Salcedo plays a prominent role throughout, especially on “I Didn’t Know About You”, a duet, and “Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me”.

Photo: Facebook

Josie Falbo

77 Ballads 2026
Josie Falbo

Kickin' It

The late Josie Falbo places her voice in front of a large ensemble, including the lush Chrystal String Section. Soloists are plentiful and noteworthy including Chris Sargent (p) on “Autumn Nocturne”, Fareed Hague (g) & Jim Gailloreto (s-sax) on “Flor de Lis”, “Love Dance” with Jeremy Kahn (p), and “I Just Found Out About Love” with Gailloreto (a-sax). Two of the selections are a quintet, notably “Social Call” featuring soloists Falbo, Geoff Bradfield (t-sax), and Steve Million (p).



Kay Kostopoulos *All This Is Possible*

Black Olive Jazz is a San Francisco-based ensemble featuring vocalist, multi-instrumentalist Kay Kostopoulos and saxophonist Noel Jewkes. They shine on “Never Let Me Go”, one of eight selections on *All This Is Possible*. The rest of the band includes polished musicians John Dimartino (p), Sean Conly (b), Vince Cherico (d), and Peter Brainin (sax). They liven the stage on “Lover/Diggin For Diz”, the gentle “Mad About The Boy”, More Than You Know”, & “I Enjoy Being A Girl”.

78
Ballads
Black Olive
2026



Photo: Kay Kostopoulos

O's Vocal Features



Photo: Martin Bonventre

Martin Bonventre

Swingin' In A New Dimension

75
Splendito
Ballads
2026

Martin is a show style singer with well-articulated lyrics. The liner notes suggest that he can sing both cabaret and jazz styles. The best cases of the later are on “Sometimes A Day Goes By” and “I’m All Smiles”. But describing a singer as “Broadway-styled” is not necessarily a bad thing! Martin can stand with jazz crooners for sure, but his strengths are on the stage.

Various Artists

89 *Songbook Ink*
Ballads 2026

Accentuate The Positive

Accentuate the Positive is a celebration of the American Songbook on America's 250th Birthday. It is a double album packed with 21 songs from the 1920s–40s dedicated to the late Ken Peplowski. The featured artists include some of the best young jazz musicians in New York with Felix Peikli (cl), Bryan Carter (d), and vocalists Robbie Lee (p), Angela Grey, Tahira Clayton, & Wyatt Michael. There also polished vets like Harry Allen (sax), Nikki Parrot Nikki (vocals), Jane Monheit (vocals), and Byron Stripling (vocals, t). These are fine arrangements of classics that are sure to resonate with a large audience.

For Every Man There's A Woman

Jack Wood

75
Jazz Hang
Ballads
2026



Photo: Ray Smith

Crooner Jack Wood is based in Southern California, where he delights many audiences with live performances. For Every Man There's A Woman is his latest release. The supporting cast is a wide array of local musicians and special guests, The Lenora Raphael Trio, and guitarist Doug MacDonald. There's a taste of Brazil on “Tristeza”, surrounded by many romantic ballads with Wood's velvet vocals. There are 15 songs in total capped with an excellent rendition of “Pretty Women “.

O's Vocal Features

NicoleYvette

Say Yes

We welcome Seattle based vocalist, NicoleYvette to the contemporary jazz scene with vocals and a message that hasn't been heard in many years, for her debut, Say Yes. It is a mix of jazz, gospel, roots, soul, and R&B backed by core band of Dawn Clement (p), Jermaine Paul (b), Andrew Renfroe (g), Terri Lyne Carrington (d), and several notable, guest artists. She shares the mic with Kurt Elling on "Such Is the Love", "Come Close" with Keyon Harrold and J. Ivy, and the title track with Joel Ross (vibes). We also enjoyed her take on "Night and Day", "Inuka Uangaze" featuring Carrington, and "We Rise at Dawn" featuring Renfroe.



79
R&B+Jazz
NicoleYvette
2026

Photo: NicoleYvette

Tom Ricci

Ballads 2026

Happening In Buenos Aires

Tom Ricci is an Argentine **Tom Ricci 76** crooner, guitarist, songwriter, and arranger, now based in Southern California. He returned to his birth city to record Happening in Buenos Aires Live at Borges 1975 with a prearranged trio, arranger Pablo Sanguinetti (p), Bruno Migotto (b), and Oscar Giunta (d). They did not rehearse prior to the performance on June 20, 2023. The spontaneity makes this happening a special, one-time event. "Naranja en Flor", a tango with Spanish lyrics, "Mood Indigo", the Brazilian twist of "Quiet Nights", and a unique arrangement of "Besame Mucho" are some of the bests of the dozen selections.

Photo: Tomas Moya

Ruth Rothwell

The Empire Child

76
Ballads
Fine Roots
2026

British vocalist, songwriter Ruth Rothwell's mom was Indo-Jamaican and her dad from South Africa, bringing global threads to her voice and style. She makes her debut as The Empire Child after many years developing artists at MCA/Universal. She gets support from Spanish producer, keyboardist, composer Mariano Díaz. The music has elements of jazz, soul, reggae, and pop providing songs that will appeal to a broad contemporary audience. "By Boat", "Step Up, Step On", "Trace The Race", "Feeling Of Healing" and "Mind Be Free" are highlights.



O's Bass Features

Christopher Dammann

Dead Words

Chicago-based bassist Christopher Dammann takes us on an improvisational jazz journey with Dead Words, billed as a collection of spiritual contrafacts. These are newly inspired melodies over chord progressions of a standard jazz tunes. Dammann's accompanying band includes Jim Baker (p), James Davis (t), Jon Irabagon (sax), and Mike Reed (d). Our favorites of the five selections are the bookends, "Montrose B" and "This Is An Unraveling", along with "White Gladis".

78

Avant Garde
Shifting Paradigm
2026



Photo: Shifting Paradigm

Tony Grey

76 *The Orchard*
2026 Pop+Jazz

Nostalgia

Bassist, composer, Tony Gray teams up with the legendary, jazz pianist Bob James for his debut recording, Nostalgia. The program is full of soothing, relaxing, and mostly New Age, contemporary jazz. The union between Grey and James began when Tony visited Bob at his home studio where they discovered a like-minded approach, and this recording unfolded as a result. Sit back relax and enjoy it. "Let It Happen", the mysterious "Dancing In Paradise", "Domino" and the title track are notable.

Sue Cahill

Evanstonia

76
Modern
Sue Cahill
2026

Bassist, composer Sue Cahill forms a trio with pianist Dawn Clement and drummer Dru Heller to perform 7 originals on Evanstonia. The music is original modern jazz that swings on the Monk-like opening title track, relaxes us on "Blue Light" & "Fading Into Autumn", then is more subtly provocative on "Violet Snow" and introspective on "Serenata". Dawn adds vocals on the closer "June, February" in an album that we easily listed to more than once.



Photo: Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

O's Trumpet Features

82
Modern
Windtunnel
2026

Gabriel Mark Hasselbach *Midcentury Modern Vol. 4*

Canadian trumpeter Gabriel Mark Hasselbach returns to traditional jazz with the 4th Volume of MidCentury Modern. He leads a core band with Miles Black (p), Lawrence Mollerup (b), and Joel Fountain (d). We liked “Terra Firma Irma”, the swing of “Driftin”

with Cory Weeds (t-sax), and “So What ... Now?” Hasselbach changes the lineup on a couple of tracks, first “Funk In Deepfreeze” bringing in Jeff Lorber (p), Chuck Loeb (g), Brian Bromberg (b), and Gary Novak (d), then Hasselbach sings with Deborah Carter on “Jazz Party” along with Glenn Riley (b) and Paul Driver (d). We’re just talking about the 15 tracks on the CD. There are 5 bonus tracks (16-20) online, that add to the party.



Photo: G.M. Hasselbach

Bria Skonberg *Indigo*

Canadian trumpeter, vocalist Bria Skonberg is back with Indigo, a recording tilted towards more accessibility, while retaining strong jazz roots. Her core band is arranger Gil Goldstein (p, acc), Eric Wheeler (b), and Darrian Douglas (d perc). She also deploys strings and woodwinds to soften the sound. The program is mostly covers of standards with Skonberg singing more than playing her horn. Guitarist David Rourke shines on “So It Goes”, the sole original. Her rich vocals resonate with the music on “I’m Glad There Is You”. When she does pick up her trumpet, it’s magical and on “Fragile” and “Mood Indigo”.

Photo: John Abbott

76
Classic
Cellar Music
2026



O's Trumpet Features

Ted Chubb

Live at the Statuary

Photo: Princeton.edu

77
Bebop
Circle 9
2026

Trumpeter, composer and bandleader Ted Chubb performed Live at The Statuary in Jersey City, New Jersey to an enthusiastic audience. The venue was a former sculpture factory that has been repurposed by Chubb and his wife into an intimate jazz setting. The band includes Bruce Williams (a-sax), Oscar Perez (p), Tom DiCarlo (b), and Jerome Jennings (d). "Little Flower Girl", "Django", "Uptick" and "Expat" are notable selections.



Rachel Spencer

74 Modern 2026
Rachel Spencer

The Next Right Thing

Trumpeter Rachel Spencer has some pent-up anger about several things that are going wrong. But she's learned that sometimes music can be an expression for relieving some of that tension. In this case, she partners with a fine team, including Michael Dease (tb), Gene Centeno (a-sax), Andy Langham (p), Liam O'Dell (b), and Adam Jackson (d). The Next Right Thing is the result. "Steamrollin'", "Essential Company", the mellow "Queen of Cups", and "I Can Almost Remember" are some of the bests of the 7 tracks.

John Vanore

Easter Island Suite

Photo: J Paul Simeone

Trumpeter, composer, and producer John Vanore leads his large ensemble, Abstract Truth on Easter Island Suite. There are four well developed movements that capture the mystery and suspense of 1000 or so statues on the island. Our favorite is "Mvt. 3 The Secret Caves" with solos from Michael Mee (sax, fl), Bob Howell (sax), Brian Landrus (b-cl), Greg Kettinger (g), Dan Monaghan (d), and Craig Thomas (b).



75
Big Band
Acostical
Concepts
2026

O's Guitar Features

Jim Witzel

Photo: Jim Witzel

Very Early

79
Fusion
Joplin Sweeney
2026

Composer, guitarist Jim Witzel leads a quartet with Phil Aaron (p), Dan Feiszil (b), and Jason Lewis (d) on a tribute to Bill Evans, Very Early. The program includes Aaron and Witzel's favorites from Evans Trio albums. We liked "Solar", "Israel", and "Nardis in a cool set! Guitar lovers, fans of Evans and jazz lovers in general will find this satisfying!



Jeremy Green

74 Fusion
J. Green 2026

In Motion

Toronto-based guitarist Jeremy Green lights up eight new original compositions for his latest release. He leads a band with drummer Keith Carlock, bassists Will Lee, Tim Lefebvre, Rich Brown, Jimmy Haslip, or Moto Fukushima, and guitarists Mark Lettieri, Mike Stern, Allen Hinds, Jared James Nichols, or Oz Noy. Chase Baird (sax) and Mark Levron (t) ad accents. The wide variety and configuration of musicians keep it fresh all the way through. We were bobbing our head from the opening title track, and we knew this was a potent brew! "The 55" and the energetic drive of "Tee Shot", further define the spirit of In Motion, an engaging rock-fusion session featuring Green on guitar.

Niebla Gabriel Vicéns

Puerto Rican guitarist, composer Gabriel Vicéns assembles an all-star band for Niebla, his fifth album. Roman Filiú (a-sax), Rick Rosato (b), E.J. Strickland (d), Victor Pablo (perc), and Vitor Gonçalves (p) fuel engine for this release. The songs have lots of air, allowing themes to slowly evolve, as the title (meaning fog) dissipates. We liked the syncopated title track, "Vejigante", then as the sun peaks out, "Ramaje" and "Stray Dogs".

78
Vincéns
Fusion
2026



Photo: Gabriel Vincéns

O's Guitar Features

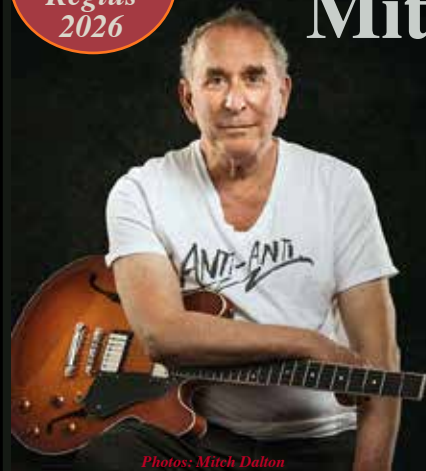
78
Pop+Jazz
Regius
2026

Out of The Shadows

Mitch Dalton

British jazz guitarist Mitchell Dalton is a proven studio musician comes Out of The Shadows to lead his latest

album. He gets support from David Arch (keyboards), Steve Pearce (b), Sammy Mayne (fl, sax) and Tim Goodyer (d) along with Germany's SWR Big Band and Edwin Bonilla (perc). The program is a good mix of fresh arrangements and a few originals. Jazz Morley adds fresh vocals across the session notably on "Yeh Yeh" and "We Do It". We also liked the Steely Dan feel of "I Got Room 335" and "Take The YouTube". "Besame Mash Up" blends the rhythms form "Oye Como Va" with the timeless "Besame Mucho". Dalton incorporates familiar riffs into his work resulting in music that is instantly familiar and pleasing.



Photos: Mitch Dalton

Anthony Garone

74 Moonjune
Pop+Jazz 2026

OK, But Why?

Progressive Rock guitarist Anthony Garone puts together an exhilarating performance on OK but Why? Garone is also the founder of Make Weird Music, on YouTube. This is his first album released in almost 2 decades. His music on this release includes rock-based guitar on top of syncopated rhythms that will not be confused with easy listening, but more energizing music. Highlights are "Three Legged Dog", "Haunch 2.0", "Pune", and both interpretations of "Concerto for Violin and Oboe".

David Blake

Radio Casual

76
Fusion
Cellar Music
2026

Canadian guitarist David Blake is now based in Brooklyn where he's making fresh jazz fusion cutting across a variety of emotions. Warren Louie (b) and Jonas Esser (d) are joined by pianist Dabin Ru as Blake's trio expands into a quartet for Radio Casual. They swing on "Nut Bread", relax on "Day Fifteen" & "Into The Marsh", get syncopated on "Joe Pass", and groove on the title track. They provide lots of improvisation without alienating their audience.



Photos: David Blake

O's Guitar Features

Kenny Wayne Shepherd

Ledbetter Heights

79
Giant
Blues
2026

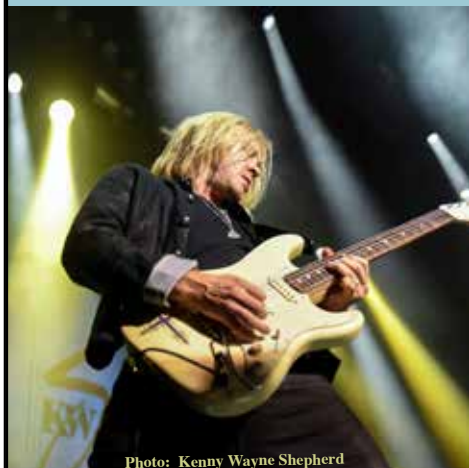


Photo: Kenny Wayne Shepherd

Rockin' blues guitarist Kenny Wayne Shepherd celebrates his 1995 debut release of Ledbetter Heights with The 30th Anniversary Sessions supported by a 2026 national tour. It's a live studio recording with the musicians feeding off each other. Vocalist Noah Hunt (g, perc) replaces Corey Sterling on all lead vocals except "Riverside" featuring Kenny on the mic. The rest of the band is Chris "Whipper" Layton (d), Kevin McCormick (b), Joe Krown (keyboards), Doug Woolverton (t), and Charlie DiPuma (sax). "Deja Voodoo", "Shame, Shame, Shame", "I'm Leaving You", and the live recording of "While We Cry" are highlights in a memorable session.

Roni Ben-Hur

Latin 2026
Dot Time 75

Abriendo Puertas

Guitarist Roni Ben-Hur assembles a core quintet with Alejandro Falcón (p), Pedro Pablo Gutierrez (b), Octavio Rodriguez Rivera (perc), and Ryu Lopez-Nussa (d) for his new release, Abriendo Puertas. Osdalgia Lesmes sings two selections and Emir Santa Cruz adds tenor sax to four songs notably "El Teide" with strong work from Falcón as well. Other highlights are "Mi Mejor Canción", "Gua' One Blues Pal Bobby" and "Lo Que es del César" with Roni asserting himself all along.

Steve Oliver

Steve Oliver is a contemporary jazz guitarist, vocalist with a positive attitude that helps calm the tides during difficult times. He uses electronics and synths generously along with guest artists on Inner Fire. Oliver sings on "Bounce Back", and Gerald Albright plays bass on "Hook Shot". We enjoyed Oliver's take on Benson's "Give Me the Night", the refreshing rhythms of "Missing You", and the groove on "Phoenix Rising".

Inner Fire



Photo: Steve Oliver

76
Wide Sky
Pop+Jazz
2026

ARTIST Title <i>Label</i> Rating	<u>Top Contemporary Picks</u> O's Notes
ALTERNATIVE GUITAR SUMMIT <u>HONORING PAT C^F</u> <u>MARTINO VOL 2</u> <i>Savant</i> 82	The second edition from The Alternative Guitar Summit is out! Honoring Pat Martino, Volume 2 escapes the sophomore jinx with more of the enjoyable music that we enjoyed on the first release. “Lean Years” with Cecil Alexander & Pete McCann, “A Blues for Mickey O” with Sheryl Bailey & Ed Cherry. “El Hombre” with Joel Harrison, Steve Cardenas, & Max Light, and “Villa Hermosa” with Chico Pineito and Cardenas. This array of talented guitarists and Martino’s music is a strong statement and a fitting tribute.
GABRIEL MARK HASSELBACH C^R <u>COUNT YOUR</u> <u>LUCKY STARS</u> 78 <i>Windtunnel</i>	Smooth jazz trumpeter Gabriel Mark Hasselbach serves up another winning hand on 2024’s <u>Count Your Lucky Stars</u>, composed and produced with Lew Lang, Jr. (rhythm). They set the mood for a mellow set starting with “SunSeeker” featuring Marion Meadows (s-sax). It’s perfect on a loop a background at a social gathering. We liked “We Are” the lone vocal featuring Alfie Zappacosta, “That Being Said” with Steve Alaniz (sax) & Andre Frappier (g), “Force of Habit” starring Mark with Miles Black (p), and Andrew Freeman (g), and “State of Play” featuring Andrew Jacob Scott (g).
TECHNOCRATS C^F <u>PASSIONATA</u> 78 <i>Shifting Paradigm</i>	The Technocrats are a septet led by bass trombonist, producer Chris Glassman, Nathan Borton (g) and Javier Enrique (b), with Walter Blanding (sax), Skylar Tang (t), Bryn Roberts (p), and Keith Hall (d). All the music is composed by co-producer Gregg Hill, ten jazz-fusion selections. Borton and Blanding deliver rolling solos on “Not Van Morrison”, and Glassman and Tang follow with strong melodies on “Nostalgia”. We also enjoyed “Horse Feathers”, “Double Play”, “Technocrats”, and the title track.
ZEJU ZHENG C^F <u>A Mind In Motion</u> <i>Shifting Paradigm</i> 78	<u>A Mind In Motion</u> is the debut album for Chinese composer, guitarist Zeju Zheng. The New York based artist leads a quartet with Arnie Sainz (p), Drew Gress (b), and Chidiebere Emmanuel (d). The six original songs reflect his impressions and growth at the dawn of his journey in the big apple. Highlights are “53”, “Simple”, the relaxing “Little Song”, and “At The Corner”. Zheng is off to a great start and shows great promise
GABRIEL MARK HASSELBACH C^R <u>JAZZ CELLAR</u> 74 <i>Windtunnel</i>	Hasselbach takes a ride on the contemporary jazz side armed with his trumpet, flugelhorn and flute. He’s joined by co-arranger Miles Black (g, keyboards), Diane Lines (p, vocals), Kerry Galloway (b), and Stephen Dick (d). This release was recorded <u>Live at the Jazz Cellar</u>. We liked the funky vibe on “Check It Out”, the Latin groove of “Si Bonita”, and “Comfort Zone”. Mark proves that he is adept in many genres!

O's Place Features

Sounds of April & Randall

Dishes Ain't Clean

77
Soaring
R&B+Jazz
2026

Sounds of April & Randall features vocalist April May Webb and trumpeter Randall Haywood. They blend jazz with pop, R&B, and Gospel influences to address a large audience.

Webb composed all the songs, with help from Haywood on “You Are Everything”. We liked “I’m Never Satisfied”, “Everybody Ain’t Gonna Like You”, and the pumping title track. Each track has a meaningful message, reflections of their lifelong experiences. It sounds good and feels good too!

Photo: April & Randall

Royal

79
R&B+Jazz
Brunsvik
Sounds
2026

Swedish singer, songwriter Jesper Lindell leads his band, *The Brunsvik Sounds* to Memphis hoping to capture some of the local, legendary sound on Royal. They are indeed successful refreshing many classics, and some lesser known soulful, blues tunes. “When Something Is Wrong with My Baby”, “Tryin’ To Live My Life Without You” featuring vocalist Frazey Ford, “Sweeter Tomorrow”, and “I Can’t Stand the Rain” are among the best of nine selections.

JESPER LINDELL



Photo: Jesper Lindell

O's Place Features

Evan Taylor

Exactly This

77
MBF
Smooth Jazz
2026

Trumpeter Evan Taylor serves up a smooth jazz delight on Exactly This, sprinkled with several guest artists. Taylor stands tall as well displaying his prowess across the session. He is a Michigan product beginning in the church before studying at Michigan State and receiving a Masters from University of Utah. Outside of academia, he's bringing it to the stage now in full force. Highlights are the danceable "Shift" featuring Richard Elliott (sax), "Scarlett Flow", "Skate On" with Dave Koz (sax), "Turn It Up", and "Swerve" featuring Phil Denny (sax).



Photo: Evan Taylor

20-year-old La Lucha is an entertaining band centered around the founding trio, keyboardist John O'Leary, bassist Alejandro Arenas, and drummer Mark Feinman. Guests are polished and plentiful including Jeff Coffin (sax), Wycliffe Gordon (tb), Guianna (vocals), and Allison Nash (vocals). Tides is a solid blend of jazz, R&B and Latin with a lot to enjoy. Highlights are the cool instrumental cover of "Feel Like Making Love", "Steppin' Out" featuring Nash and Gordon, "Mo Better Blues", "Tides", and "Polka Dots and Moonbeams".

Tides La Lucha

81
R&B+Jazz
Fuzzy Water
2026



Photos: La Lucha

Contemporary Selections

ARTIST	Title	Label	X	T
RYAN BLOTNICK	<u>The Woods</u>	<i>Fishkill</i>	73	C ^F
RAVITA JAZZ	<u>Alice Blue</u>	<i>Ravita Music</i>	72	C ^R
LUIS ALAS	<u>High Life</u>	<i>Luis Alas</i>	71	C ^P
BALLAVEU	<u>Arada</u>	<i>Microcopi</i>	71	C ^P
CHRISTIAN LI	<u>Broken Neon Signs</u>	<i>Endectomorph</i>	71	C ^P
ROBEONE	<u>If You Don't Know What It Is, It Must Be Jazz</u>	<i>Transglobal</i>	71	C ^F
SULLIVAN FORTNER	<u>Leave That In There</u>	<i>Artwork</i>	69	C ^F
DARLENE KOLDENHOVEN	<u>A Grand Memoir</u>	<i>D. Koldenhoven</i>	68	C ^P
MI XIAO-FIN/JULIAN KYTASTY	<u>Boundless</u>	<i>Anderson Audio</i>	67	C ^P
MARK MURPHY	<u>By Your Side</u>	<i>Mark Murphy</i>	66	C ^P

Bright Colors On A Dark Canvas

NASEEM ALATRASH

75
Levantine
Pop+Jazz
2026

Cellist, composer Naseem Alatrash makes his recording debut as a leader with Bright Colors On A Dark Canvas, A Suite for Cello, Piano, Percussion, and String Orchestra. The conductor is Eugene Friesen with featured soloists Chase Martin (p), George Lernis (perc) and Alatrash. The music has a mysterious, Arabic, symphonic aura but also expands to attract a broader audience. “Riwaya”, “Ramad”, and Risala - Part II” are favorites in the 32-minute session.

Photo: Naseem Alatrash



Sound Advice at a Nice Price

O's Place Legends

BOBBY MATOS

La Peña

84
Latin
Lifeforce
2026

We revisit the music of the late Latin jazz percussionist, Bobby Matos and his Heritage Ensemble with this previously unreleased, live recording. The venue was La Peña in Berkeley, California in 2007, an impromptu date just before the San Jose Jazz Festival. Bobby Matos (timbales, vocal), is joined by Judson "Jud" Matos (perc, vocal), Robertito Meléndez (congas, vocal), Theo Saunders (p), John B. Williams (b), Frank Fontaine Jr. (t-sax, fl), Danny Weinstein (tb, violin), Anthony Blea (violin), and Avoteja Jiltonilro (spoken word). The sixteen selections are captured on two discs, and it is more than a warmup for the Festival! Highlights are "Cubop Bailable", "All Blues", "Cuban Fantasy", and "Free South Africa".



Photo: Bobby Matos

www.OsPlaceJazz.com

Final Notes Fusion pianist Rodney Franklin died at 67 on July 8, 2026. The cause of death is unknown. Jazz bassist **Pat Senatore**, the last living member of the Tijuana Brass, died on August 8, 2026 at 91. The cause of death undisclosed. Guitarist **Jack Grassel** died in a car accident on August 26. He was 77 years old. **Gene Bertoni**, a jazz guitarist, died of natural causes at 89 on August 29, 2026. Jazz Trumpeter Luis Gasca-Latin died on August 2. The cause of death was undisclosed. He was 86. Jazz Vocalist **Cassandra Wilson** died of unknown causes on September 1. She was 70 years old. The musical contributions of these fine jazz professionals will remain with us through their music forever.

O's Place Features

Brian Claxton *Here Goes Nothing*

Denver radio host Brian Claxton usually plays drums but displays his prowess playing bass and composing for his second release as a leader, Here Goes Nothing. His accompaniment is producer Jim White (d), Steve Kovalcheck (g), Eric Gunnison (keyboards), and Tom Amend (organ, woodwinds). The music is upbeat contemporary jazz with blues and groove elements. “A Story And It’s Ending”, “Here Goes Nothing”, “I Could Do This All Day”, “All The Time You Need” featuring Kovalcheck, and “Kick It” and enjoyable.

Photo: Brian Claxton



74
Brian
Claxton
Fusion
2026

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!