

**March / April 2019**

**Issue 383**

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**jazz**  
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# **Next Generation Jazz Festival**

# jazz & blues report

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

## The 49th Annual Next Generation Jazz Festival Presented by Monterey Jazz Festival



Las Vegas Academy NGJF 2016 (c)MontereyJazzFestival\_ColeThompson

### 68 Groups From 11 States Are Finalists Over 100 Ensembles Will Perform 150 Shows in Downtown Monterey

Monterey CA - The 49th Annual Next Generation Jazz Festival Presented by Monterey Jazz Festival takes place April 5-7, 2019 in downtown Monterey. The weekend-long event includes big bands, combos, vocal ensembles, and individual musicians competing for a spot on the stages of the 62nd Annual Monterey Jazz Festival. All events are free and open to the public.

With more than 1200 students participating, the Next Generation Jazz Festival invites top-rated and highly competitive ensembles from across the country through an adjudicated application process to perform and compete in Monterey. In 2019, 68 groups from the United States, Denmark and Costa Rica are finalists in the adjudicated categories.

American finalists include groups from Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, and Washington State.

In addition, 37 special guest and spotlight stage ensembles are from Arizona,

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California, Massachusetts, Nevada, Washington State, and Japan. In a recurring cultural exchange program, the Tomisato High School "Mad Hatters" from Tomisato, Japan will return to Monterey as special guests. In addition, the Monterey Jazz Festival inaugural Women In Jazz Combo will perform on Saturday, April 6.

Altogether, 105 ensembles are scheduled to perform at the 49th Next Generation Jazz Festival, with over 150 performances at the Monterey Conference Center, Portola Hotel, Turn 12 Bar & Grill, Dali Expo, and Estéban at Casa Munras Hotel in downtown Monterey.

For a complete schedule of performances and activities, visit [montereyjazzfestival.org](http://montereyjazzfestival.org).

The Next Generation Jazz Festival officially starts with the annual Friday Night Judges Concert Presented by the California Jazz Conservatory at 7 p.m. on Friday, April 5 in the Serra Ballroom at the Monterey Convention Center in downtown Monterey. The show features performances by the Festival's team of internationally-renowned artists and competition judges, including the Festival's 2019 Artists-in-Residence, drummer Allison Miller and bassist Derrick Hodge.

Also featured will be Justin Kauflin, piano; Patrick Bartley, alto saxophone; Adam Larson, tenor saxophone; Tanya Darby, trumpet; Lauren Sevan, baritone saxophone; Steve Wiest, trombone; Russell Malone, guitar; and Michael Mayo, vocals. Opening the concert is the Sheila del Bosque Quartet, from Berklee College of Music. The show is free,

but VIP/Gold Circle tickets are available for \$50 to guarantee a front-of-house seat and a post-concert reception. Information can be found on [montereyjazzfestival.org](http://montereyjazzfestival.org) or by calling 831.373.3366.

The High School Competition begins on Saturday, April 6 in the Monterey Conference Center. Throughout the day, the high school groups will perform, with clinics from Allison Miller and Derrick Hodge, and the Sheila del Bosque Quartet from Berklee College of Music. College Combos will compete in the Portola Jazz Club at the Portola Hotel on Saturday night.

The top groups from the High School Vocal, Combo, Big Band, and Vocal Jazz Ensemble divisions will be announced at 6:15 p.m. Saturday evening in the Serra Ballroom, with a Showcase Concert at 8:30 p.m. The final rankings of the High School and College Combo divisions for that day will be announced at the end of the evening.

Sunday, April 7 features the Middle School, High School Conglomerate Big Band and Combos, and College Big Band and Vocal Ensemble Divisions. The top selected competition ensembles will also earn a performance slot at the 62nd Monterey Jazz Festival, September 27-29, 2019.

All weekend long, the competition stages from the Serra and Steinbeck Ballrooms will be streamed live on YouTube through a partnership with the Monterey County Office of Education's MCAET TV.

The Next Generation Jazz Festival's College Fair will be in the Portola Hotel lobby, allowing students an opportunity to visit with colleges and organizations offering jazz curriculum.

The 2019 Next Generation Jazz Festival's Partners include North Coast Brewing Company, District 7 Wines, Inns of Monterey, California Jazz Conservatory, Yamaha Drums, Yamaha Pianos, DownBeat, Remo, MCAET TV, Dali Expo, and La Tortuga Torteria.

Supporters include William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Monterey Peninsula Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Quest Foundation, California Arts Council, Harden Foundation, California Humanities, Community Foundation for Monterey County, Pebble Beach Foundation, Arts Council for Monterey County, S.T.A.R. Foundation of Monterey County, City of Monterey, Dunspough-Dalton Foundation, William H. Donner Foundation, Clarence E. Heller Foundation, Nancy Buck Ransom Foundation, Sally Hughes Church Foundation, Sal Gutierrez Foundation, Barnet Segal Charitable Trust, Joseph Drown Foundation, William H. Donner Foundation, Bill Graham Memorial Foundation, Upjohn California Fund, Enterprise Holdings Foundation, and Yellow Brick Road Foundation.

Sponsorship opportunities, program advertising information, and more details on the 2019 Next Generation Jazz Festival can be seen by visiting [montereyjazzfestival.org/](http://montereyjazzfestival.org/) NGIF or by calling 831.373.3366.

Monterey Jazz Festival, a leader in the jazz world since 1958, celebrates the legacy of jazz, expands its boundaries, and provides opportunities to experience jazz through the creative production of performances and educational programs.

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This photo of Gary Bartz captured by Ron Weinstock at the 2008 Duke Ellington Jazz Festival is just one of hundreds of Ron's photos you can view online at [www.flickr.com/photos/novaron](http://www.flickr.com/photos/novaron)



# Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour

## Performing 26 Concerts

### March 15–April 14 in 16 States and Canada



MJF On Tour (© R.R. Jones)

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

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

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

of jazz, which is the essence of the Monterey Jazz Festival, to rest of the country."

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

Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour is produced by Danny Melnick for Absolutely Live Entertainment (ALE) and booked by The Kurland Agency, which also produced and booked two previous MJF tours in 2013 and 2016. Visit [www.montereyjazzfestival.org](http://www.montereyjazzfestival.org) for more information.

About the Performers....

One of the most acclaimed vocalists of her generation, Cécile McLorin Salvant is the winner of the 2010 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition. Other honors include selection for Jazz Album of the Year by the DownBeat International Critics Poll and NPR, as well as Top Female Vocalist from the Jazz Journalists Association. Cécile grew up in a bilingual

household in Miami and traveled to Aix-en-Provence to pursue a degree in French law while training as a classical and baroque singer before switching to jazz. Her last two Mack Avenue releases, *For One to Love* and *Dreams and Daggers*, each won Grammy Awards for Best Jazz Vocal Album. Her newest Mack Avenue release, *The Window*, is an album of duets with pianist Sullivan Fortner. Rolling Stone describes Cécile as "...one of the greatest jazz singers of her generation, but that label sells her short."

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

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

Pianist and MJF on Tour Music Director Christian Sands is a five-time Grammy nominee. Growing up in New Haven, Connecticut, he started playing professionally at the age of 10, and received his bachelor of arts and master's degrees from the Manhattan School of Music. A protégé of Dr. Billy Taylor, Sands began a six-year association with bassist Christian McBride in 2009, and has followed in Dr. Taylor's footsteps by encouraging, inspiring and advocating for the preservation and history of jazz. In 2015, he started the Jazz Kids of Montmartre in Copenhagen, Denmark; he also teaches at Jazz in July, where he is an alumnus. His second Mack Avenue release, *Facing Dragons*, was reviewed by NPR as a "...crisply assured new album...that expresses new ideas without abandoning the old."

Bassist Yasushi Nakamura is one of the most commanding voices on bass today. Born in Tokyo,

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

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

#### About Monterey Jazz Festival

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

Visit [www.montereyjazzfestival.org](http://www.montereyjazzfestival.org) for more information and tour dated/locations. Below is a list of the cities on the tour.

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

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

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# Why Some People Think Duke Ellington Is a Member of the Royal Family.

**KIDS DON'T GET ENOUGH ART THESE DAYS.** So you can see why some of them might accidentally confuse a jazz legend named Duke with royalty named duke. But it's finally time to set the record straight.

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington didn't rule over a small English estate. Instead he reigned supreme over jazz institutions like The Cotton Club. He rified



*A piano player. A composer. An orchestra leader.  
Duke Ellington reigned over a land called Jazz.*

Sentimental Mood," and "Take the 'A' Train." His historical concert in 1953 at the Newport Jazz Festival has entered the lexicon of legendary live performances. There is no doubt about it, Ellington's brand of jazz has contributed significantly to the American songbook and to the lives of anyone who has ever tapped their foot to a beat.

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can



*Royal dukes are squaresville.  
They have no rhythm  
And they wear crowns.*

powerfully on the piano, but it was the full orchestra that he considered his most compelling instrument. He introduced improvisation to his compositions — a process unheard of using a 15-piece orchestra. The result was a different approach to jazz that sparked a revolution and an evolution. His music spread across the world with songs like "Sophisticated Lady," "In a

really transform lives. In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science. And the more likely they'll become well-rounded, cool members of society. For Ten Simple Ways to get more art in kids' lives, visit [AmericansForTheArts.org](http://AmericansForTheArts.org).



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Image created by Corbis-Bettmann. TM 2008 Estate of Mercer K. Ellington by CMC Worldwide





We only bring you  
the Cream of the Crop!



## ATOMIC ROAD KINGS

**Clean Up the Road**  
**BIGTONE RECORDS**

The Atomic Road Kings is a joint project of guitarist-vocalist-songwriter-engineer Big Jon Atkinson and harmonica wizard Eric Von Herzen. The two are present on all 12 tracks (11 written by Atkinson and 1 by) along with Bill Stuve on bass and Malachi Johnson on drums.

While Atkinson is the vocalist throughout, he only plays lead guitar on 4 tracks and rhythm on 4. Scot Smart, Danny Michel, and Tony Delgado take lead on other selections and pianist Robert Welsh guests on 1.

Atkinson recorded this using vintage, all analog gear and was done live to tape with the effort to capture the sound of the 50s gospel, blues and the like and presented in mono as opposed to stereo. The result is solid retro-oriented blues performances. Atkinson comes across as a robust, straight-forward singer on these songs that are idiomatic Chicago-styled blues with solid backing. Similarly, Von Herzen is a marvelous harmonica player with a full tone in the manner of George 'Harmonica' Smith.

Things start off with the solid "I Got Time," continue with Rumors" that feature a terrific Tony Delgado solo. On "My Way Back Home," Atkinson plays driving, lead acoustic guitar with Von Herzen's effectively repeating a riff in the backing. Then he plays some stinging electric guitar on the doomy title track with the harp adding to the atmosphere of the performance. In a similar vein, "Vibrations" has Danny Michel's stinging guitar along with Welsh's piano, while "Ain't For Me" is a moody shuffle.

The atomic Road Kings strongly evoke the sound and feel on 50's styled Chicago blues on "Clean Up the Road," a splendid recording that will appeal to fans of classic Chicago blues. **Ron Weinstock**



## ASHLEY PEZZOTTI

**We've Only Just Begun**  
**SELF-PRODUCED**

This debut recording by the 23-year-old singer Ashley Pezzotti is one that displays a very intriguing talent.

She is backed by Emmet Cohen on piano, Bob Bruya on bass, and Kyle Poole on drums, with Alex Weitz adding tenor saxophone to 7 of the 13 songs on this release. Her intonation, the clarity of her phrasing, her vocal dynamics, and her timing are impeccable, and she is also a wonderful songwriter inspired by the American Songbook.

The opening "It Only Takes a Moment," is taken at a breakneck tempo which she navigates with ease singing the lyrics as well as scatting. The title track is a wonderful original with her handling tempo changes and Weitz adds a wonderful solo while the rhythm section is terrific. There is the Latin spice of another original "Solo Tú," where she sings in Spanish with another marvelous tenor sax solo and Cohen's exquisite piano solo. Poole also pushes this swinging performance with a deft, light touch.

"That Way" is a sprightly performance with some horn-like scatting, and followed by her lovely ballad, "I Hope You Find Her," another striking lyric as well as vocal. There is plenty of warmth in Weitz's tenor sax that caresses her captivating voice on "September in the Rain," with some sublime scatting, Cohen's fine solo and Weitz's feathery tenor sax solo. Bassist Bruya solos and trades fours with Poole.

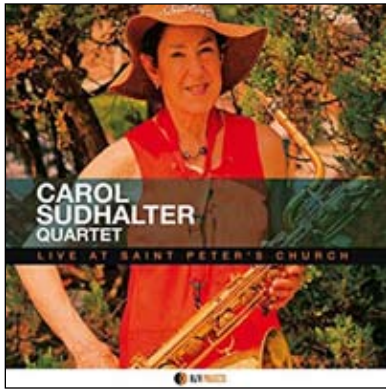
There is also her wistful vocal on "Darn That Dream," accompanied only by Cohen, followed by the performance of "Jackie," that is taken at a brisker tempo than Annie Ross' original.

Again she delivers the lyrics and scats with clean, swinging precision with the same sympathetic backing as present throughout this recording. It is an exhilarating close to a superb debut of a vocalist we will be hearing more of.

This should be available on March 29.

**Ron Weinstock**

**jazz-blues.com**



## CAROL SUDHALTER QUARTET

Live At Saint Peter's Church  
ALFA MUSIC

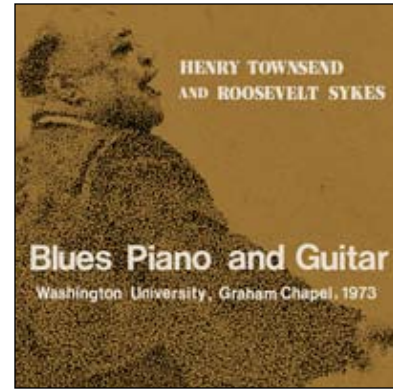
A pioneering woman in jazz, Carol Sudhalter has, since the early 1970s, been advancing the cause of women in jazz as a musician (she is among the finest baritone saxophonists of the past several decades but also quite accomplished on tenor sax and flute), big band and combo leader, producer, and educator. She played with the first female Latin band and founded the Astoria Big Band (still active for 33 years). She had a discography of over ten albums to which this new release, recorded at a performance at New York's famed St. Peter's Church is a welcome addition.

She is backed by a tight quartet that includes Patrick Poladian-piano, Kevin Hailey-upright bass, and Mike Campenni-drums and they perform fresh renditions of songs by Jobim, Sonny Rollins, Benny Golson, Tadd Dameron, Bill Evans, Hank Mobley, Don Redman and two originals. The opening rendition of Tadd Dameron's "On a Misty Night" quickly establishes the authority and inventiveness she brings to the baritone sax with her robust, brawny attack while the backing trio provides strong support throughout this swinging, modern jazz set.

There is a haunting Benny Golson ballad "Park Avenue Petite" that exhibits her emotional range on the baritone sax while Hailey contributes a melodically grounded solo. There is a lovely flute solo on Bill Evans' "Time Remembered." There is a bit of swagger to her playing on Hank Mobley's "Funk in Deep Freeze" along with some stunning piano which leads into a crisp drum solo.

She sings with a certain charm on "Colin Blues" which is dedicated to one of her students. It should be noted that the vocal, along with spoken announcements, is not well miked. Poladian is terrific here as is the leader on flute. There is a strong rendition of Sonny Rollins' "Valse Hot" along with Poladian's swinging "Fun in the Alley" with the leader's playful flute. Bassist Hailey is featured on "Gee Baby Ain't I Good To You," set against some excellent piano while Campenni varies his stick work to complement the two. A short melodic reading of Jobim's "Luiza" closes this strong live recording by a woman who should be much better known.

**Ron Weinstock**



## HENRY TOWNSEND AND ROOSEVELT SYKES

Blues Piano and Guitar: Washington University,  
Graham Chapel, 1973  
OMNIVORE RECORDINGS

Having recently been delighted by Omnivore's expanded reissue of Henry Townsend's wonderful Nighthawk album, "Mule," Omnivore has brought out this album of previously unissued performances recorded at a concert at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Roosevelt Sykes was one of the greatest blues pianists of all time and recorded prolifically on his own as well as backing other musicians, while Townsend had a recording career that spanned nine decades. The two first met in St. Louis in the 1920s when Sykes gave Townsend pointers on playing the piano. In 1930, Sykes took Townsend and Walter Davis to a Paramount recording session. In 1931, Sykes and Townsend traveled to Louisville, Kentucky. The two remained lifelong friends and this concert performance was the first of several reunions before Sykes passed away in 1983.

Based on this recording, this was a magical evening with both artists performing a diverse group of numbers from their repertoire. Both were also at the top of their game. Townsend sounds and plays with considerable vigor on these recordings. He strongly reworks Clifford Gibson's "Tired of Being Mistreated," his own "Henry's Worry Blues," and with his wife, Vernell joining on a vocal, "Why We Love Each Other So." Then there is also a fine rendering of "Sloppy Drunk," and a superb rendition of "Tears Come Rollin' Down" with Vernell taking the lead vocal. He switches to piano for "All My Money Gone."

Sykes' performances open with his "Night Time Is the Right Time," and among his strong performances are "Driving Wheel," "The War Is Over" (also known as "Sunny Road") which is one of two performances on which Townsend adds his guitar behind Sykes piano and vocal, "Ice Cream Freezer," "Sweet Home Chicago" and an R-rated "Dirty Mother For You ("You Don't Know)."

Among his other performances is a barrelhouse boogie-woogie of "Boot That Thing," and an exuberant, robust rendition of Fats Waller's "Honeysuckle



Rose.”

This two-disc release, with 30 performances, captures the two at the top of their form. LeRoy Jodie Pierson, who produced this release with Cheryl Pawelski, contributed the liner notes along with several rare photographs to this outstanding release. This will be released on March 22. **Ron Weinstock**



**BRIAN NEWMAN**  
**Showboat**  
VERVE

A Cleveland native, singer and trumpeter Brian Newman's debut recording is this new Verve release. Before coming to New York, he studied trumpet at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music. In New York he started playing around while bartending, eventually leading his quintet playing several nights a week which developed its tight sound.

He made a name for himself as a consummate entertainer on the NYC club circuit in recent years with extended engagements at The Oak Room, Birdland, The McKittrick Hotel and The Rose Bar. A friend of Lady Gaga who he met while bartending, he sometimes plays on her shows, and she appears on one selection. Newman's quintet backs him here and is comprised of Steve Kortya (Saxophone, Flute), Alex Smith (Piano, Keyboards), Joe Peri (Drums), Daniel Foose (Bass), and Paul Francis (Drums, Percussion). Some originals are mixed in with American Songbook classics on this disc which was produced by Dae Bennett, Tony Bennett's son, and record producer.

Newman is quite a capable trumpeter with a swinging, bright tone while saxophonist Kortya is also quite impressive as on the opening "San Pedro," a driving number that also displays how good the rhythm section is with the horns trading fours with drummer Francis. His singing is decent but not as strong as his melodious trumpet, as can be heard on the catching original "Tropicalia." "Dancing In The Moonlight" has a funky reggae-flavored groove along with hot and appealing playing by Newman and Kortya. "Sunday in New York" is a lively tribute to his current home city with a credible vocal and more spirited playing.

Lady Gaga is, of course, a celebrated popular vocalist who has established herself as a singer of standards with her duets with Tony Bennett. She takes the spotlight on "Don't Let Me Understood," with her personality exhibited

here with strong trumpet accompaniment. The old pop instrumental "Spooky" is revived with a melodic rendition with Smith on organ. Newman sings poignantly on "You Don't Know What Love Is," with some likewise poignant trumpet and Smith adding an engaging solo. Then there is the effervescent, swinging "Pennies From Heaven," with choice piano as well strong tenor sax. Bassist Foose is solid throughout, but especially strong here where he also solos.

With a lively Afro-Cuban big band feel, Tom Waits' "Jockey Full of Bourbon," closes this recording with a capable vocal and vivacious playing. With the strongly played and engaging music on "Showboat," Brian Newman and his Quintet display the reasons for the considerable appeal of their music. **Ron Weinstock**



**KENNY PARKER**  
**Hellfire**  
ROCK-A-WHILE

Albert King may have sung about the "Cadillac Assembly Line," but Kenny Parker worked at the Cadillac Factory during the day while playing in the bands of Detroit blues artists Mr. Bo (Louis Bo Collins) and The Butler Twins at night. While touring Europe with the Butler Twins in 1996, he caught the attention of John Stedman of JSP Records who recorded his debut recording "Raise the Dead" with The Butler Twins along with harmonica master Darrell Nulisch.

Parker is not the most prolific recording artist as the present album is only his third album. He is backed by his band that includes vocalist and harmonica player Dave Devins, bassist Mike Marshall and drummer James Marcaccio with former Mitch Ryder guitarist Jim McCarty added on six of the 12 tracks). Among others present are keyboardists Bill Heid (who recorded decades ago with Koko Taylor and Fenton Robinson on Alligator) and Chris Codish (who graced the late Johnny Bassett's band). Parker is not a singer but wrote 11 of the 12 songs with the other contributed by Omar Dykes.

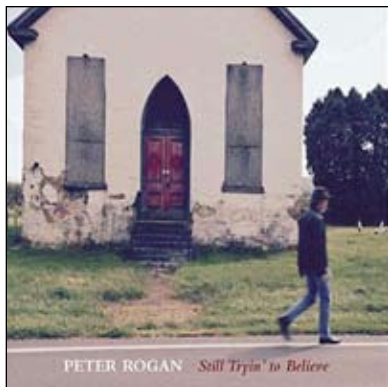
This is a straight-ahead modern blues date with occasional rock and roll touches. Things get off with a nicely played, relaxed shuffle "I Got My eye on you" with not only a solid vocal from Devins but a nice harmonica solo with Parker and McCarty swapping solos while Heid lays down some rollicking piano.

Some funky organ and slashing guitar is present on the funky ‘Baby Come Back To Me,’ while there is a deep blues feel to the slow “Blind and Paralyzed,” and then some hot rock and roll on “Bye Bye Baby,” with Leonard Moon’s buoyant piano and Mccarty’s sizzling slide guitar. The title track is a tough cautionary take of this woman Ruby whose kiss might blow your mind but be the death of one.

“Goin’ In Circles,” has a lazy, loping Jimmy Reed shuffle groove as Devins sings about going in circles over this woman with Heid pounding the 88s in support, although “Dance With Me” is less convincing in part because of its hypersonic tempo. “I’m Missing You” is a nicely done southern soul lament in the vein of Percy Sledge, while “Half Crazy” is a marvelous rocking blues shuffle. Another slow blues, ‘Backup Plan” may be the top performance here with Devins’ best vocal and some superb playing from both guitarists standing out.

A hard rock, blazing interpretation of Omar & the Howlers topical “Hard Times in the Land of Plenty” robustly closes out Parker’s very memorable new recording.

**Ron Weinstock**



**PETER ROGAN**  
**Still Tryin’ To Believe**  
**MELT SHOP RECORDS**

On this, his debut release, 57 year old singer, songwriter, guitarist Peter Rogan takes a holiday from his full-time day gig as an electrician at a Pennsylvania steel mill and works some sonic magic.

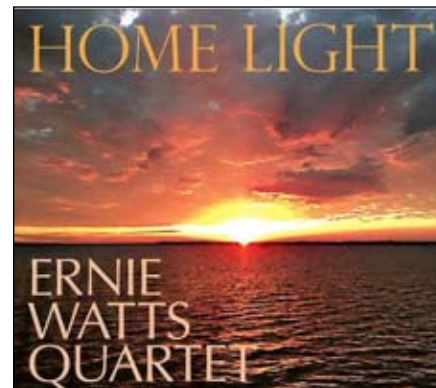
Accompanied by first rate guests including Phil Madeira and Will Kimbrough on guitars and a host of vocalists, Rogan has crafted a terrific collection of 13 tracks of roots, Americana and blues music that often recalls big band collectives like Tedeschi Trucks or Mad Dogs and Englishman era Joe Cocker with glorious hooks and big choir vocals.

One-time winner of the Great American Song Contest, Rogan knows his way around lyrical hooks that sink the music into that spot where you can’t shake it. “Kickin’ The Can” is a witty mixture of semi-spoken rap and slinky vocals about the perils of procrastination while “River Man” is swampy blues about putting your fate in the hands of another. “The Rolling Mill Blues” is a blues stomper about the daily grind and “The Start of Something Easy” is a pop-inflected gem

about kindling an enduring no-sweat relationship. Elsewhere, on the brooding “Mercy” Rogan muses on the role of personal lineage in what becomes of us as we travel through life. “Big Green Rambler” is a salacious blues with Rogan promising a solid, fine ride. The instrumental slow jazz of “Song for Keith” is an unexpected treat near the end of the disc.

Rogan thoroughly inhabits these tunes with an earnest, soulful voice that recalls Anders Osborne. With a debut this strong, it is unlikely that we won’t be hearing much more from Peter Rogan.

**Mark Smith**



**ERNIE WATTS QUARTET**

**Home Light**  
**FLYING DOLPHIN RECORDS**

What a career Ernie Watts has had including a stint in the Tonight Show Orchestra, 25 years doing studio work for films and recordings (including those by Marvin Gaye and others on Motown), three decades in Charlie Haden’s Quartet West. And with all this, he has produced a number of excellent recordings as a leader. The saxophonist’s excellent Quartet has been together for 18 years and includes Heinrich Koebberling on drums, Rudy Engel on bass and Christof Saenger on piano. Of their previous recording, “Wheel of Time,” I observed that “The Quartet was a terrific band.”

Watts contributed three compositions of the nine tunes heard here opening with a hard-driving composition that is a contrafact of “I Remember April,” titled “I Forgot August.” As on the prior record, Watts asserts himself with his robust, driving and imaginative soloing while Saenger’s dynamic piano, as well as the propulsive rhythm section, contribute to this fine performance. Drummer Koebberling contributed “Cafe Central 2 AM,” a bluesy number with a nice walking tempo with Watts providing a lesson in blues saxophone and conveying the late-night ambiance suggested by the title with thoughtful solos from Saenger and Engel. On Oscar Ruiz’s “Distant Friends,” Watts is heard on soprano as well as alto sax. Saenger is especially impressive with the fluid eloquence of his playing, while with Koebberling being quite dynamic in propelling this along.

Watts’ energetic “Frequeie Flyers,” has an Ornette-like feel to it with Koebberling spectacular here in sup-

port of Watts husky playing. In contrast is the Watts-Saenger collaboration, "Horizon," a gorgeous ballad with lyrical playing and marvelous backing by the rhythm. Then there is the bouncy interpretation of Sam Jones' tribute to Oscar Pettiford, "O.P.," that showcases Engel's fine pizzicato playing and tone before Watts and Saenger solo. After the charming "Spinning Wheel," there is Brad Goode's tribute to Joe Henderson, "Joe," a percolating performance with an Afro-Cuban groove. Watts has a burly alto sax solo but is also heard on soprano (overdubbed?) at the beginning and end with intriguing inter-weaving horn lines.

The title track, Watts' "Home Light" is a heartfelt performance with a gospel tinge and dedicated to Watts' friend, the late drummer, and percussionist, Ndugu Chancler. This heartfelt tribute provides a close to another excellent album of straight-ahead jazz by Watts.

**Ron Weinstock**



## ROCKIN' JOHNNY & QUIQUÉ GOMEZ

**Dos Hombres Wanted**  
VIZZTONE

Singer-guitarist Rockin' Johnny Burgin has unquestionably established himself as a practitioner of old school Chicago style blues through his work with the likes of Taildragger, Eddie Taylor Jr, Little Arthur Duncan, Mary Lane, Jimmy Lee Robinson and Willie Buck as well as on his idiomatic recordings. Hailing from Madrid, Spain, singer-harmonica player Quiqué Gomez has a reputation as a jazz-influenced blues singer who also is a Sinatra stylist with a Spanish Big Band. They have joined forces on an album of 11 originals, and three choice covers backed by Eric Przygocki on bass and Stephen Dougherty on drums with Christian Dozzler on piano or accordion, Josh Fulero on guitar on three tracks, Greg Izor on harp for one track, and Farris on trombone on one track.

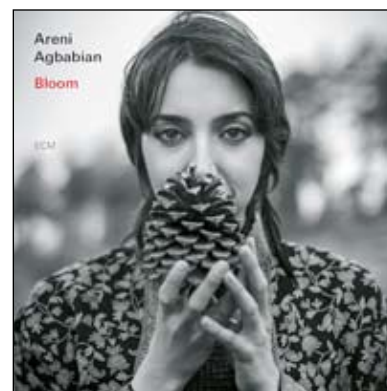
This recording will appeal to Chicago blues fans as this is a tight band led by two strong singers and players evident from Rockin' Johnny's opening shuffle "Your Charm Won't Help You," with a short fiery solo. Gomez establishes himself as a most capable singer on "Take It Like It Is" with his full-bodied harp solo following solos from Fulero and Burgin. He also sings on Burgin's "You Can't Steal My Sugar," although the

performance is a bit too frenzied. A real surprise is a cover of Robert Lockwood Jr.'s "Funny But True" with a strong vocal by Gomez and Rockin' Johnny evoking Lockwood's unique guitar style.

With Dozzler adding accordion, Rockin' Johnny delivers a clever lyric using gambling analogies on 'Ain't No High Roller," the performance of which includes a particularly strong harmonica solo, followed by a stinging guitar solo. There is also an outstanding slow blues sung by Burgin, "Coffee Can Blues." Kudos to Przygocki and Dougherty who throughout provide steady and firm support. "Livin' Day to Day" is a topical blues played against a Jimmy Reed shuffle groove on which Gomez delivers a fine vocal. More Jimmy Reed shuffle flavor is evident on Gomez' "Otro Hombre," a jaunty performance sung in Spanish.

With trombone and accordion, Burgin's "Step it Up Bro" is a change of pace that is more in the vein of a Nat King Cole jive blues. It sports exceptional harmonica that owes as much to Toots Thielemans as Little Walter and a jazzy guitar solo. "Are You Ever" is a first-rate Louisiana styled swamp blues rocker in the manner of the late Lazy Lester with perhaps Burgin's finest vocal on this recording. Gomez takes the lead vocal on a relaxed reworking of Tampa Red's "Don't Blame Shorty," which again has marvelous and imaginative harmonica along with Burgin's evocative classic Chicago blues guitar. It is a splendid close to a marvelously entertaining Chicago styled blues album.

**Ron Weinstock**



## ARENI AGBABIAN

**Bloom**  
ECM

The delicate touch and minimalist character of pianist/vocalist Areni Agbabian's music compels the listener to lean intently towards it, rewarding the effort with engaging chemistry at a near-molecular level. The interaction of voice, piano and percussion present here makes for creative, economical "use" of an extremely compact space. Vying for attention with Ms. Agbabian's enchanting vocals is percussionist Nicolas Stocker's consistently focused brushwork. This will be released in late April 2019.

**Duane Verh**

**jazz-blues.com**





## TAYLOR SCOTT BAND

### All We Have

TAYLOR SCOTT MUSIC

I want to start out with a warning for the blues fanatics in the audience: "All We Have" might not be your cup of tea. What we have here is more roots rock or, if you prefer, Americana music.

My thesaurus doesn't have another word for eclectic, so I have to go with that until further notice. A goulash of many styles all mixed in. Produced by Steve Berlin of Los Lobos, "Somebody Told Me" is a good example of the overall project, with Chris Harris' funky bass adding subtle moves on the song's bottom. "Salted Watermelon" has a dash of country as "Wishing Well" (not the Free song) is another roots rocker via Nic Clark's harmonica. "Where This Is Going" is a solid rocker as "The Walk" makes for a good power ballad.

Direct from Denver, Taylor Scott is pumping out good stuff if you have liberal tastes when it comes to music.

*Peanuts*



## SIMONE KOPMAJER

### Spotlight On Jazz

LUCKY MOJO BLUES

This recording is the 13th album by the Austrian born vocalist Simone Kopmajer who has developed an international reputation. Kopmajer is backed by tenor-saxophonist Terry Myers, guitarist Martin Spitzer, pianist Paul Urbanek, bassist Karl Sayer, and drummer Reinhardt Winkler. There are six standards and seven originals (from Kopmajer, Myers and Urbanek.)

Kopmajer impresses with the clarity of her singing,

her musicality, the purity of her sound, her phrasing and her diction. It does not hurt to have a solid swinging band handle a variety of material including very nice interpretations of "Pennies From Heaven," 'a delicate "Poinciana," the second-line strut on "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," with drummer Winkler strutting on a solo while Meyers is on clarinet and superb in his accompaniment and solo. She also does a charming "Exactly Like You" with a gentle vocal and some playful scatting again with Myers on clarinet.

Myers' tenor sax is marvelous on the swinging 'Stompin' at the Savoy," as well as displays considerable warmth on the lovely ballad Kopmajer and Myers wrote, "A Gift From Buddy," while the swinging "We're Goin' In," has strong guitar from Spitzer along with terrific piano by Urbanek. Then there is the playful, mostly wordless singing on "Dig That Riff," also heard as a remixed bonus track. Simone Kopmajer and her marvelous band deserve kudos from an engaging and charming vocal jazz recording. *Ron Weinstock*



## CATHERINE RUSSELL

### Alone Together

DOT TIME

The daughter of Luis Russell (Louis Armstrong's big band leader) and pioneering guitarist-bassist Carline Ray, Catherine Russell has established herself as a superb jazz singer. "Alone Together" is her seventh studio album and is the vein of her prior recordings, bringing together a range of vintage material from the twenties until the seventies.

On this recording, she interprets songs associated with the likes of Rosa Henderson, Louis Jordan, Cecil Gant, Nat King Cole and Fats Waller along with standards from the American Song Book. She is backed by a band rooted in the swing style of the thirties and forties that include Matt Munisteri on guitars, Mark Shane on piano, Tal Ronen on bass, Mark McLean on drums, Jon-Erik Kellso on trumpet, John Allred on trombone, and Evan Arntzen on tenor sax, with a string trio employed on one selection.

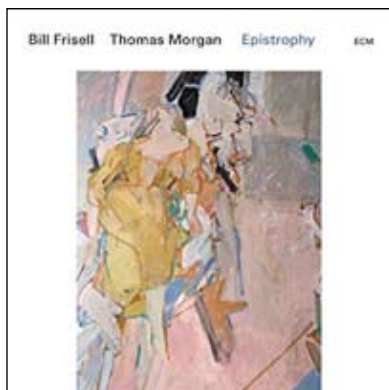
Opening with a rendition of the Schwartz-Dietz title, Russell delights with the warmth and delivery of her vocals while the backing band is superb with Allred and Arntzen soloing. On an album full of songs

touching on love and its pitfalls, Munsiteri's acoustic chording launches "You Turned the Tables On Me," as she wistfully sings about her ex who let her fall with a drop." Mark Shane is outstanding on this hornless selection.

A lovely rendition of "When Did You Leave Heaven?" uses strings cushioning her vocal and has Munisteri taking a tight electric guitar solo. Solid interpretations of a couple of Louis Jordan songs, "Early in the Morning," and "Is You or Is You Ain't My Baby?" follow with the band being outstanding. Kellso provides the riff-based horn arrangement on "Early in the Morning," with a terrific tenor sax solo by Arntzen as well as some strong jazz-blues guitar. She ably handles the lyrics of "Is You or Is You Ain't My Baby?" which displays how good a blues singer she is. Kellso is exquisite on his muted trumpet solo. Her revival of Cecil Gant's classic blues-ballad "I Wonder" captures the song's wistfulness.

Then there is her infectious, delightful revival of a 30's pop swinger, "You Can't Pull The Wool Over My Eyes," and her swaggering rendition of Rosa Henderson's 1923 recording, "He May Be Your Dog But He's Wearing My Collar." Munisteri plays dobro on this. Then there is an effervescent take on Nat King Cole's jumping jive, "Errand Girl For Rhythm," and the warmth in her rendition of "I Only Have Eyes for You."

A charming rendition of Fats Waller's "You're Not The Only Oyster In The Stew" closes another marvelous Catherine Russell recording. **Ron Weinstock**



**BILL FRISELL  
THOMAS MORGAN**  
**Epistrophy**  
ECM

The intimacy and invention of the jazz duo format is on splendid display on guitarist Bill Frisell's & bassist Thomas Morgan's current offering- a "live" session from the Village Vanguard. The interplay is of a highly engaging character; a continuous weave of craft that suggests a deep degree of familiarity shared by these players. Frisell's eclectic nature shows as well in this varied set list drawing from jazz classics "Lush Life" and the title track, classic pop and Americana- "Save The Last Dance For Me", "Red River Valley" and even a James Bond theme- "You Only Live Twice".

Nice work.

**Duane Verh**



**WATERMELON SLIM**  
**Church of the Blues**  
NORTHERNBLUES MUSIC

This is the 13th album by William P. Homans, better known as Watermelon Slim, dating back to 1973 when his "Merry Airbrakes" recording was celebrated as one of the first anti-Vietnam War albums done by a military veteran. It took him 29 years for his second album, "Big Shoes To Fill," which established his acclaimed career. Mississippi Fred McDowell is perhaps his biggest influence, and he developed his slide style as well as his gritty, raspy vocals. He co-produced this album with Chris Hardwick as well as plays harmonica and electric slide guitar. He is backed by his band of John Allouise on bass and Brian Wells on drums. He has guests including guitarists Bob Margolin, Nick Schnebelen, and Joe Louis Walker; vocalists Sherman Holmes and John Nemeth; and keyboardist Red Young. While the guests may add interest to this recording, it is Slim with his strong playing, vocals, and personality that makes this album so enjoyable.

The recording opens with "St. Peter's Ledger," as he authoritatively delivers Ron Meadow's lyrics about where he might end up in the after-life and displays his strong slide guitar style. He follows up with one of several topical songs, Tom McFarland's 'Tax Man Blues, a strongly performed working man's complaint of having too much taken out of his pay stub.

The strong backing enhances his strong singing and slide guitar solo. Muddy Waters' "Gypsy Woman" (with slim on harp and Bob Margolin adding playing slide) is one of several covers of classic Chicago blues that he avoids copying the original while placing his stamp on the performance. Other similarly strong performances include Howlin' Wolf's "Smokestack

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Lightning” and J. B. Hutto’s “Too Much Alcohol.’ He makes minor changes in the arrangement (no trace of broom dusting on the Hutto number) so that these songs receive a fresh feel along with his powerful singing and playing.

Slim’s “Post-Modern Blues,” with the strutting horns, has him singing about trying to deal with the rapid changes of the 21st Century, while “Hollar #4” is a moving vocal moan about blues and his own life. His rendition of Allen Toussaint’s “Get Out of My Life Woman” with his slide driven accompaniment evokes the early Paul Butterfield cover while a similar funky feel is present on a cover of Gene Barge’s “Me and My Woman,” the latter tune sporting more fine harmonica. Among other high points is the high-stepping topical blues about protests and the increasing visibility of overt racism “Charlottesville (Blues for My Nation),” with his hope for better days for all. An amusing bonus song, ‘Halloween Mama” closes another excellent Watermelon Slim recording. **Ron Weinstock**



## **TED PILTZECKER**

**Brindica**  
**ZOHO**

Originally a trumpet major at the Eastman School of Music and a member of the Jazz Ensemble under Chuck Mangione’s direction, Ted Piltzecker started practicing vibes at the time and even wrote some vibes numbers while with the band. He became a full-time vibes player after a tour with The George Shearing Quartet. “Brindica” is his fifth album and first for Zoho Music, and the title reflects cultural influences from Brazil, India, and Africa but he also had stops in Bali, Cuba, Puerto Rico, New Orleans, and Harlem and has woven these diverse musical landscapes into the tapestry of this album.

Recorded in Argentina with a core group of drummer and co-producer Fernando Martinez, pianist Miguel Marengo, bassist Mauricio Dawid and alto saxophonist Carlos Michelini, “Brindica” also features guest appearances by trumpeter Jon Faddis, baritone sax player Gary Smulyan, tenor saxophonist Ralph Lalama, trombonist Matt Hall and steel pan/snare drummer John Wooton. Other guests include classical clarinetist Ayako Oshima and classical flutist Tara Helen

O’Conner, and Cuban percussionist Jansel Torres on bata and conga.

Some of the musical influences are heard on the opening Afro-Cuban flavored, “Great Idea! Who Pays?” with Wooten’s steel pans adding to the jubilant feel while Michelini adds some taut sax trading fours with the leader’s shimmering playing on this joyful performance. Wooten switches to snare drum to help provide the Crescent City grooves of the infectious “Uncle Peck,” with Faddis, Smulyan and Lalama weaving in and out of the leader’s solo with Faddis blasting off with his solo. Pianist Marengo provides a compelling riff as well as an intricate solo on the Latin flavored “Feliz Paseo” with another notable solo from Michelini and more infectious playing by the leader and this splendid rhythm section.

The title track is a thoroughly-composed composition where Piltzecker blends rhythmic elements of Brazilian and African music. It showcases clarinetist Ayako Oshima and flutist Tara Helen O’Conner. The breezy ‘Look At It Like This” that was inspired by a trek through the Himalayas and the melody reflects the beautiful little pentatonic tunes sung by his guide Hari. Another selection of note is Taylor Burgess’ hauntingly beautiful vocal interpreting Langston Hughes’ iconic poem “What Happens to a Dream Deferred?” with Piltzecker providing an elegant vibes solo.

With fresh, varied compositions, and wonderful performances, Ted Piltzecker has provided listeners with this wonderful new recording. **Ron Weinstock**



## **GREGG BELISLE-CHI**

**Book of Hours**  
**EARS&EYES RECORDS MAY 3**

Guitarist Gregg Belisle-Chi leads an electrified four-piece unit through an eight-movement, liturgically-based suite with results one might not expect within the range of this format. An ethereal space prevails, populated with majestic and sometimes darkly-shaded ballad themes and processional tempos. When things do reach the occasional boiling point, the leader rides atop with counter-statements of sonic rage prior to re-entry to a moody, not-quite-melancholy realm. Electric pianist Dov Monski provides a simpatico second voice for this curiously compelling set. This will be released May 3. **Duane Verh**





## TOMISLAV GOLUBAN

Chicago Rambler

Spona

I recently reviewed a fascinating recording by the Croatian harmonica player Tomislav Goluban with the keyboards of Toni Starešini which resulted in some fascinating sonic explorations. The present CD is more in the vein of Chicago styled blues and was produced in a Chicago studio with a band consisting of Eric Noden on guitar; E.G. McDaniel on bass; and Kenny 'Beady Eyes' Smith on drums with Joe Filisko adding harmonica on two songs. Goluban wrote eleven of the twelve songs. The other song is a traditional Croatian song.

Goluban's nickname is 'Little Pigeon' and the album kicks off with a hard-rocking instrumental that displays his full-bodied harmonica style, "Pigeon Swing." It is followed by "Locked Heart," a charming performance in the manner of Slim Harpo with a low-key vocal and harp and suggests Slim Harpo's "Raining in My Heart." Goluban may not be the most expressive singer, but his soft-spoken vocals do display a genuineness. This makes his original "Jerry Ricks on My Mind," a moving remembrance set to an rumba groove as he sings "Hey Mister Jerry would you play a song for me ...," with Noden playing atmospheric slide guitar. This is also performed acoustically with the guitarist evoking Ricks finger-style approach.

Besides his appealing singing, the backing adds to the charm of these performances whether the driving shuffle of "Bag Full of Troubles," with some spectacular harmonica from Filisko, or the moody slow blues "Can't Find Myself," with a marvelous harp solo that adds to the song's feel. Then there is "One Way Ticket" which opens as an unaccompanied harmonica train solo before morphing into small group train blues. "Do the Right Thing," is an original using the Bo Diddley beat, followed by the autobiographical "Little Pigeon" with Filisko on harp set against a classic Muddy Waters styled backing.

An easy rocking rendition of a traditional Croatian song "Išem budem v kleticu (I'll Go to My Cottage)," closes a surprisingly engaging recording that delights one with each listening.

**Ron Weinstock**

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## CARLOS HENRIQUEZ

Dizzy Con Clave: Live at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola  
RODBROS MUSIC

Henriquez, the bassist with Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra for the past twenty years, leads an octet on an exciting Afro-Cuban tribute to Dizzy Gillespie that was recorded live at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola at Jazz at Lincoln Center in late 2017. His band consisted of trumpeters Michael Rodriguez and Terrell Stafford, trombonist Marshall Gilkes, tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana, pianist Manuel Valera, drummer Obed Calvaire, and congas/vocalist Anthony Almonte.

It goes without saying that Dizzy Gillespie helped create the 'Cubop' era inspired by trumpeter Mario Bauza and percussionist Chano Pozo. Henriquez devised the superb arrangements of Gillespie's compositions, whether bebop classics like "A Night in Tunisia" or "Groovin' High," or the Afro-Cuban classics such as "Manteca" and "Con Alma" that are performed so powerfully here.

"A Night in Tunisia" certainly gets this recording off to a hot start with Melissa Aldana and Michael Rodriguez both soloing hot against the volcanic rhythm section with a thunderous percussion segment. Muted trumpets open "Groovin' High," before Rodriguez takes off with a blistering Afro-Cuban accented solo before Henriquez displays his facility and imagination before the performance transitions into a hot mambo band romp as Almonte takes the lead vocal with the horns blasting. Like the entire recording, it is an exhilarating contemporary synthesis of modern jazz and the traditional Cuban rhythms.

Then there is the exciting performance of "Bebop," that showcases Stafford's explosive trumpet followed by Aldana's sizzling tenor sax. "Manteca" is taken perhaps at a slightly less blistering pace, but the horn ensemble explodes, and the rhythm percolates like a Yellowstone geyser with Rodriguez brilliant on trumpet here. "Con Alma" is given a lush arrangement and taken at a comfortable pace with all four horns soloing along with pianist Valera. Valera and trombonist Gilkes stand out with their romantic, lyrical playing.

"Dizzy Con Clave" is a wonderful recording by a superb band with compelling performances of the terrific inspired arrangements by the Henriquez that greatly honors the memory and legacy of Dizzy Gillespie.

**Ron Weinstock**



**VIN MOTT**  
**Rogue Hunter**  
**SELF-PRODUCED**

New Jersey blues stylist, Vin Mott is heard on his second recording with his vocals and harmonica backed by his tight band of Dean Shot on guitar, Steve “Pretty Boy” Kirsty on bass and drummer Matt Niedbalski. Mott wrote all twelve of the songs here and the performances come across like a good cold draft of one’s favorite beer.

Certainly one can identify with the sentiment of “Car Troubles Give Me the Blues” as well as the rocking shuffle “Give Me Cornbread.” Both display his raw harmonica as well as powerful singing that is full of passion while his backing trio provides a full but not crowded sound. Shot is a solid and versatile guitarist who can add fills or take a single note solo. On the title track, he adds some Elmore James-Homesick James influenced slide guitar with Mott taking a nicely paced solo, and there is some nice interplay between the two while Kirsty and Niedbalski provide a tight bottom. The backing of “Ice Cold Beer” evokes some early 50s Memphis band blues from the Sun Studios, as Shot conjured up Willie Johnson backing Howlin’ Wolf.

Then there is “Honey” where Mott’s harp is in the vein of Rice Miller, the second Sonny Boy Williamson, with a nice relaxed vocal and lazy accompaniment. In contrast, “Whistling By the Graveyard” is a spirited original making use of the “John Henry” melody with a skiffle band feel to the backing. It is followed by the superb topical blues of a Northern city’s decay, “Patterson Is Crumblin’,” with tough harp and guitar. The closing instrumental, “Greaser,” has an unusual structure that underlies the moody performance that serves as a coda to this wonderfully played album of traditionally grounded blues. **Ron Weinstock**



**RHYTHM FUTURE QUARTET**  
**and Friends**  
**SELF-PRODUCED**

One might disagree with the press release that describes the Rhythm Future Quartet as “America’s premiere Gypsy jazz ensemble,” but there is no doubting that this is a tight acoustic quartet that plays with an irresistible swing. Incidentally, I prefer the term manouche jazz or hot club jazz to describe this music. They are composed of Jason Anick on violin, Olli Soikkeli on guitar, Max O’Rourke on second guitar and Greg Loughman on bass. On their new recording, they have special guests: the acclaimed singer Cyrille Aimée), Brazil’s top bandolimist Hamilton de Holanda, and the great manouche jazz guitarist Stochelo Rosenberg.

The album opens with the spirited “Jaytude No. 1 in Em” composed by violinist Anick who shines here along with guitarist Soikkeli as O’Rourke and Loughman maintain a steady pulse. In contrast “Cachoeira” captures a more reflective mood. Cyrille Aimée contributes a soft, charming vocal to a cover of Duke Ellington’s “Solitude” with Anick’s obligatos adding to the performance’s appeal. Soikkeli’s “Olli’s Bossa” is a feature of his deft, guitar pyrotechnics along with some sweet, soaring violin and intriguing interplay between the two.

Then there is the marvelous acoustic bebop of the group’s interpretation of Oscar Pettiford’s “Tricotism,” which opens with Loughman setting the tone opening this performance and Anick sounding superb here. Hamilton de Holanda adds the bandolim, an instrument derived from the mandolin and engages with Anick and O’Rourke in the unusual “Jazz Chimes.” Manouche jazz lends itself to romanticism and that is evident on Anick’s “Treetops.” On “Desvairada” by the legendary Brazilian composer and guitarist Garoto, the quartet provides their own take on Brazilian choro music.

The Quartet also is heard on an ebullient rendition of Django Reinhardt’s classic “Minor Blues,” with Soikkeli terrific. Rosenberg joins the Quartet on Anick’s “Sleepless” and adds some spectacular, breath-taking guitar here. The album closes with O’Rourke’s “136 Harrison” which has a string octet from the Berklee College of Music lending this performance an almost nostalgic tone. It closes this thoroughly engaging recording by a terrific acoustic jazz quartet. **Ron Weinstock**

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## TOMMY CASTRO AND THE PAINKILLERS

**Killin' It Live**  
**ALLIGATOR**

This is a crackling good live recording by one of the most popular blues and roots bands out there. Castro has been out there over three decades and Alligator has given us nearly an hour of 10 performances recorded at five venues across the USA. Castro is supported by his superb band of Randy McDonald on bass, Bowen Brown on drums and Mike Emerson on keyboards.

Castro and the Painkillers get this CD party going with the rollicking "Make It Back To Memphis," a song that might inspire comparisons to Delbert McClinton with Emerson's honky-tonk piano underpinning Castro's searing guitar. After his song of perseverance, "Can't Keep A Good Man Down," Castro delivers a blues-rock rendition of Sleepy Johnny Estes' "Leaving Trunk," inspired by Taj Mahal's fifty-year recording with some greasy organ.

To this listener, the next two tracks are the high points. During the slow, low-down blues (composed by Castro and Joe Louis Walker) "Lose Lose," I was struck how much his singing and guitar evokes late sixties' Buddy Guy which I suspect is among the music he grew up with. Then there is the driving shuffle performance, "Calling San Francisco." "Anytime Soon" is a soulful reflective topical blues followed by the funky and amusing "She Wanted To Give It To Me," where Castro sings about resisting a hot lady as he made a promise to his own lady to be true and kept it. Then there is the rocking soulful shuffle "Two Hearts."

The album closes with a lengthy, ably performed, rendition of Buddy Miles' "Them Changes," with bassist McDonald channeling "Tighten Up" during his solo. This crowd-pleaser closes out an excellent recording that shows why Castro continues to have such a large following.

*Ron Weinstock*

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## ERNESTO CERVINI'S TURBOPROP

**Abundance**  
**ANZIC RECORDS**

About his band Turboprop, Ernest Cervini observes "although I am the band-leader, Turboprop truly feels like a collective due to the passion, commitment, and love everybody brings to each performance."

This sextet is a formidable one with some of the finest talents from Toronto and New York City: Tara Davidson on Alto and Soprano Saxophones and Flute (Toronto), Joel Frahm on Tenor Saxophone (New York), William Carn on Trombone (Toronto), Adrean Farrugia on Piano (Toronto), Dan Loomis on Bass (New York) and Ernesto Cervini on Drums (Toronto). Ms. Davidson is an addition to the personnel that was on their last recording "Rev," that I found full of "strong solo voices and first-rate ensemble work."

The present recording has a mix of 5 originals by band members (including two by Cervini) and three standards. It opens with Davidson's original "The Queen," with a slightly exotic flavor and strong solos from her and Farrugia. The pianist is also sterling on a terrific rendition of Tadd Dameron's "Tadd's Delight" which has some riveting tenor sax from Frahm while Loomis and Cervini push this sterling performance along with the two trading fours. A fresh arrangement of "My Shining Hour" was derived from Geoffrey Keezer's recording with sterling ensemble playing and a shift into a Latin groove. Carn's melodic ballad playing graces the interpretation of Charlie Chaplin's classic "Smile."

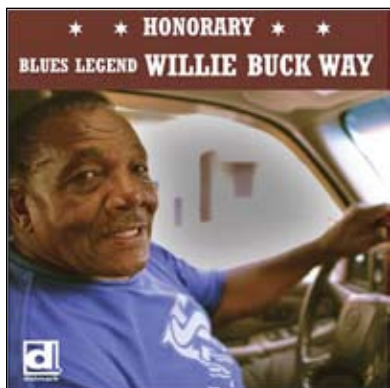
Loomis' "Abundance Overture" opens with Cervini playing with his sticks before Davidson on flute and Frahm on tenor sax play a playful figure before Cervini plays his entire kit before Loomis, Farrugia, and Carn join in this ebullient performance. Farrugia contributed "The Ten Thousand Things" which opens with Loomis' choice bass in addition to the composer's far-ranging piano solo followed by some fiery tenor sax.

Cervini contributed the final two compositions. "Gramps" is a lovely ballad dedicated to his late grandfather and has Davidson's lovely, graceful alto saxophone set against an exquisite ensemble arrangement. The closing "For Cito," dedicated to the former Toronto Blue Jays manager Cito Gaston, is a robust



performance with solid, imaginative solos from Carn and Farrugia and fresh, imaginative arrangements.

Like the previous recording, Turboprop impresses with tight ensemble playing, the inventive, marvelous arrangements, and the impressive soloing, making "Abundance" a striking recording. **Ron Weinstock**



**WILLIE BUCK**  
**Willie Buck Way**  
**DELMARK**

Reviewing Delmark's 2010 expanded release of Willie Buck's 1982 album, "The Life I Love," I observed that the music was "strong traditionally rooted Chicago blues that one hears played so well less frequently nearly three decades later." Buck, whose career extends back decades, remains a strong blues singer who is displayed on the 17 new selections on this new release. Backing Buck, who is solely a songwriter and singer, are Billy Flynn on guitar; Thaddeus Krolicki on guitar; Scott Dirks on harmonica; Johnny 'Fingers' Iguana on piano; Bob Stroger on bass and Jimmy Mayes on drums. Big Spider Beck plays harmonica on three selections and piano on two while Harmonica Hinds plays harp on two.

Muddy Waters is a strong influence on Buck's music as one can hear on Billy Flynn's original, "Can't Say Something Good About Me." But while he delivers a vocal robustly, he does not try to sound like Muddy. Buck also sings with a relaxed, swinging quality as on the opening "You Want Me To Trust You." The backing is solid, idiomatic Chicago blues with Krolicki taking most of the leads while Iguana impresses with his Otis Spann influenced playing. Dirks is a more than capable harmonica player while Beck evokes Mojo Buford on "Can't Say Something ...," which also has a stinging Flynn solo under a spoken part. Buck's capabilities as a singer are also displayed on his "There's a Woman," a song with a Howlin' Wolf evoking backing.

There is plenty of variety on this album including the unplugged "My Mind Might Freeze Up" and "Twenty-Four Seven" with Krolicki on acoustic guitar and Hinds on harmonica. There is also strong, relaxed shuffle rendition of "Crawlin' King Snake" which is usually taken at a slow tempo. Beck rips off a strong harmonica solo on this. Another standout track is

Buck's sermon to his fellow men, "The Men Ought To Learn (To Treat The Women Right)," with superb backing and a focused solo from Krolicki. There is a choice pair of covers of songs associated with Muddy: the slow, moody "Please Have Tenderness" with Beck on piano, and the relaxed shuffle "How Deep Is the Ocean" as Buck calls out to the lady "look what you done" with Beck wailing on harmonica while Iguana pounds on the ivories.

While the title track musically hints at "Blow Wind Blow," Buck lets us know that he is a blues legend and an all-around man with some fine blues piano. Billy Flynn plays some Muddy Waters' styled slide guitar on an excellent rendition of Leroy Carr's "Blues Before Sunrise," that owes much to Muddy Waters' recording of this song. With echoes of the melody for "Sloppy Drunk," "I'd Rather Leave You" closes this album on an easy rocking vein with another solid Flynn solo. Other selections are generally of similar quality with strong vocals and wonderfully backing. Like Willie Buck's prior recordings, "Willie Buck Way" is an excellent album of traditionally styled Chicago blues.

**Ron Weinstock**

**jazz-blues.com**



## SHELLY BERG, JOSÉ SEREBRIER & THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

### Gershwin Reimagined – An American in London

UNIVERSAL/ DECCA GOLD

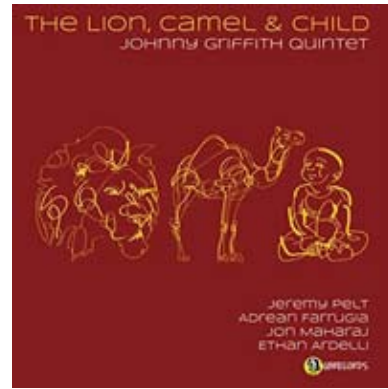
Grammy nominee pianist Berg and his trio team up with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for an exhilarating take on the music of George Gershwin. Also present as guests are fiddler Mark O'Connor, trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, and vocalists Ledisi and Monica Mancini. This cross-genre recording allows jazz improvisations within an orchestral framework as they perform some of George Gershwin's most famous compositions.

More than half of the recording time is devoted to delightful renditions of "Rhapsody in Blue," and "An American in Paris," both of which include the Shelly Berg Trio providing improvisations in and out of the piano cadenzas while the Orchestra is wonderful in its performances. On "An American in Paris" they also include the original and rarely heard Ira Gershwin lyric "Home Blues," with the trio accompanying Ledisi's vocal.

Following is a medley from Gershwin's opera, "Porgy and Bess," "I Loves You Porgy" & "My Man's Gone Now," sung by Monica Mancini and set to a musical arrangement by multi-Grammy recipient and Pulitzer Prize nominee Patrick Williams on what was likely his last recording. In addition to her moving singing, Sandoval is equally compelling with his solo and embellishments. Mark O'Connor's fiddle and Berg's trio's improvisations delightfully weave in and around the orchestra's backing. The conductor of the Orchestra, José Serebrier orchestrated "Three Preludes" that was initially composed by Gershwin as three short piano pieces. It starts with a brief improvised piano solo.

Variations on "I Got Rhythm" is presented as a complete symphonic version and features the Shelly Berg Trio on a performance that features some marvelous swinging stride piano as the performance moves in and out of the symphonic orchestration, with Berg also playing more classically. It is a fascinating performance that closes a superlative reimagining of one of the great American composers. **Ron Weinstock**

**jazz-blues.com**



## JOHNNY GRIFFITH QUINTET

### The Lion, Camel & Child

G-B RECORDS

Toronto saxophonist Griffith leads his Quintet of fellow Toronto jazz All-Stars, Adrean Farrugia - Piano, Jon Maharaj - Bass and Ethan Ardelli - Drums, along with the great Jeremy Pelt on trumpet. This is Griffith's second recording, and he drew inspiration from the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche - specifically the book *Three Metamorphoses*. As Griffith explains, "Metamorphoses is concerned with what propels each new phase of human growth, so it seemed fitting to frame this as a suite - each track individual unto itself, yet when listened to as a whole representing the arc of the personal struggle to know more and be more."

Opening this recording is the four-part title suite that illustrates the phases of Nietzsche and the qualities defining: "The Lion," virtuous and rebellious; "The Camel," courageous and dutiful; and "The Child," playful and free of spirit. "The Lion" opens at a brisk tempo with the leader displaying a full robust tone and a fertile musical imagination with Pelt in a melodic vein and centered in the middle range with occasional upper range bursts. One also is impressed by this first-class rhythm section, that transitions into the relaxed walking pace of "The Camel" that features Farrugia's stately piano solo as Maharaj and Ardelli provide a hint of the Mid-East caravan procession enhanced by the joint horns. A solo "Cadenza" by Griffith transitions into "The Child" a vigorous performance opening with heated tenor sax, followed by fiery trumpet and strong two-handed piano and a dynamic drum solo.

Not just the writing, but the entire ensemble displays its considerable virtues throughout this CD. "Narcomedusae" is another notable performance with Pelt exceptional here on a composition that might evoke comparison to classic sixties Blue Note recordings. Then there is the animated hard bop of "Strawberry Qwik," and a lovely ballad "Amarone," with Pelt's pretty muted trumpet along with Griffith's own marvelous ballad playing. Other notable performances include the fiery "For a Derailed Painter" with explosive solos from the horns and pianist Farrugia. Bassist Maharaj solos at the beginning of "Deliciously Ambiguous," a relaxed groover with more engaging solos by Griffith, Pelt, and Farrugia.

Johnny Griffith impresses as a composer, saxophonist, and leader. He has a fabulous band here with Pelt and a wonderful rhythm section that plays superlatively throughout this outstanding recording. **Ron Weinstock**





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