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Georgia Mancio

Vocalist **Georgia Mancio** spoke to Charlie Anderson about her second album with acclaimed pianist Alan Broadbent, *Quiet Is The Star*, released on 27th March.

Tell us about your latest album with Alan Broadbent, *Quiet Is The Star*.

Quiet Is The Star is the duo follow-up to our previous album *Songbook* which we released with our quartet in 2017. Both albums are made up solely of our originals – Alan’s music and my lyrics – and are now part of a collection of 33 songs that we have co-written together, published for the first time in our forthcoming book.

We recorded the album in just one day back in October 2019, following a short series of concerts in Germany and the UK. We didn’t have specific arrangements or even a rehearsal so it was a very organic and authentic session. The 9 songs relate by theme and mood: as the title suggests it is an intimate recording which explores the ties we bind, and let go of, in life. Though our approach is a jazz one we think of them as art songs with a universal appeal that aim to touch your heart with shared experiences.

We are very fortunate to have worked with our great producer, Andrew Cleyndert, again and the artist Simon Manfield who created some stunning bespoke watercolours for the cover and booklet.

What qualities do you look for in a musician to enable a good collaboration?

I think the most important thing is a shared sensibility and to be equally invested in the partnership. It may be you each have very different strengths and skills but identifying them is key and then trusting the other to lead or be led as appropriate. And the ability to listen, really listen, is paramount.

Tell us about the other things that you're involved with.

I produced 5 editions of an international voice festival, ReVoice! (2010-2014) and then another series, my ‘Hang’ for 3 editions (2017-2019) until the pandemic put a pause on it. ‘Hang’ is a really important platform because it brings together lots of different collaborations of mine, forged over the years, and it clarified that I am a multi-faceted and enquiring artist, who may never settle with one definitive project.

I have a quartet with pianist Kate Williams, bassist Oli Hayhurst and drummer Dave Ohm that I can’t wait to perform with again. Kate and I also have a larger project called *Finding Home* that we toured in 2019 and won Best Album with at



Georgia Mancio and Alan Broadbent by Tatiana Gorilovsky

the 2020 Parliamentary Jazz Awards. We would definitely like to develop and explore the work further with this very special group of musicians.

How have you spent lockdown?

Most of lockdown has been spent working on this album and our accompanying book *The Songs of Alan Broadbent and Georgia Mancio* – hours and hours (well, months really!) of post production, art direction, proof reading and then PR. I also had time to dedicate to writing, which usually has to fit in around performing: the book grew because I was able to finish 8 new lyrics over an intensive period. The focus and sense of empowerment in creating and producing have been a salvation.

I've been teaching online throughout as well. I'm a visiting voice teacher at City University with

students in various genres from jazz to pop to musical theatre. That has given the week structure and purpose in no small measure and it's been inspiring working with such talented students.

Like everyone I guess, there were a lot of good intentions set in March 2020 but apart from practicing a little French every day (I'm currently on day 399!), most have quietly slipped out the back door. I've tried to get out in nature as much as possible and I did finally finish Couch to 5K on my 4th attempt!

What do you enjoy most about being a musician?

The variety! Working with and meeting so many different people in all kinds of settings. I think it's energising and forces you to



Tatiana Gorilovsky

constantly engage, or re-engage with your environment and community to stay current. It's probably why many have struggled this year because there's a lot of camaraderie on gigs and impromptu social gatherings: I guess the opposite to the timed Zoom meetings!

It's a privilege to be able to use your work as a means of growth and self-expression. All life's experiences, moments of elevation and depression, go into my music. It's cathartic and instructive and very moving to share that with others.

What are you looking forward to most this year?

It's a given to say 'performing live again with an audience' but it's also too simplistic. I saw three people very close to me go through the worst of times this year – not Covid related directly but certainly

complicated by its ramifications. So honestly I can say that I hope we can all get to a safer place this year. I know we all lost a lot of our freedom and sense of self but I think we also learnt the importance of health, connection and kindness and we shouldn't forget to carry those through.

The album *Quiet Is The Star* was released on 27th March, 2021 on Roomspin Records.

The album *Quiet Is The Star* is released alongside a book containing the sheet music for all 33 of their compositions together, entitled *The Songs of Alan Broadbent and Georgina Mancio*.

www.georgiamancio.com



Benet McLean

Musician **Benet McLean** is excited about his new project, one which sees him leading a quintet on violin, the instrument he played as a youngster. Here he talks to Charlie Anderson about the new band and his journey as a violinist, pianist and composer.

Tell us about your violin quintet.

It's project that I'm really excited about. It's come together in the past couple of years and I really love the combination of players. It's quite inspiring to be on stage with those guys and playing that material. I'm quite excited about it and hoping to get going when things lighten up.

How did you get together with those particular players?

Well, it's a different story with all the different guys. Me and Trevor Watkis go back the furthest. I used to be a big fan of the Jazz Cafe's Young Warriors. They used to put on a weekly session and it would be Trevor on piano, Tony Kofi and Byron Wallen. I would usually be at the back of the room, soaking it all in and loving it. So I hooked up with him there. Clark Tracey and Rio Kai I hooked up with via some gigs I did with a keyboard player called Sona. Duncan Eagles - we've known each other for a number of years, probably about a decade now. We started playing firstly at Ronnie Scott's and we've done various projects together as well. So it's just really nice the way it's come together. I really like the direction as well. The bebop and

hard bop direction is where I want to go.

How would you describe the music that you play?

I would say the core direction is bebop and hard bop, played with a contemporary approach. It's a mix of standards and originals. Probably at the moment more standards than originals, actually. Choice standards that everyone is interested in playing. I don't just want it to come from my choices, I like it to come from the other guys as well. We'll probably bring in more original material as we get going. We've only had a couple of gigs at the moment. It's still a fairly new project, but we did a wicked gig at Toulouse Lautrec in London, which was sold out, and really nice.

How did you get into playing violin?

That was actually my first instrument. I started on violin when I was three, and from the age of three until I was twenty that was my main focus. I don't even remember getting my first violin. My mum tells me I used to ask for a violin. I think I saw a friend of hers playing one; I was



Daniel Redding

really mesmerised and pestering her to get me a violin. I don't actually remember any of this as I was too young. From then on it was something that I really loved. Then at age 20 I took an abrupt left turn and the piano/keyboard thing took over. I've just got back into violin in the past 5 or 6 years and it's just been really beautiful, and with a new perspective.

Jazz violin tends to have that image of Stephane Grappelli and gypsy jazz and you tend not to hear it so much in contemporary jazz.

Absolutely, I agree. I find it really inspiring to hear the new dynamic that the violin brings to these sorts of styles that we're doing. I just feel quite inspired these days, with the idea of bringing the violin into those sorts of areas. I'm a big fan of Jean-Luc Ponty and various other

contemporary violinists. It all feels quite natural to me.

Are there any other projects that you've been working on?

During lockdown I had the chance to do stuff that I probably wouldn't have had the chance to do. I had video footage of some gigs from a few years ago that I probably wouldn't have had as much time to get onto. So I spent lockdown learning how to video edit. I guess a lot of musicians are doing that at the moment as well. That's been quite nice because I had a particularly nice gig that I played at the 606 a few years ago, which was an amazing line up of Julian Joseph on piano, Steve Williamson on sax and Clark Tracey on drums. That was in the video vaults so it's out now on YouTube.

I've also been practicing quite a

lot, trying to develop my playing further. We also did two videos with the new quintet, between the two lockdowns, of the tracks *The Message* and an original called *Blue Fingers*. I've also been doing some online violin teaching. It feels quite busy but it's certainly quite a downer, to not be gigging.

Have you been okay during the pandemic, in terms of getting your head around everything that's been happening?

Sometimes it feels okay, sometimes it feels heavier. I guess everyone's feeling that kind of thing. I'm just hanging in there and still trying to make plans for when it all lifts, and trying to keep positive. I stay in touch with friends. I'm good friends with Duncan Eagles, so we chat and keep in contact.

You're still playing piano?

Absolutely. Right up until the first lockdown I was still gigging on piano as well as violin. I'm anticipating getting back to some of that as well, but for me, with the violin, I feel closer to that. It's funny because even when I wasn't playing violin, I would always still come home and listen to violin music, or watch a DVD of violinists. It's kind of a blessing to get back to it. I didn't know it was going to happen like that. It's kind of an accident in a way.

When you compose music is that something you naturally do at the piano, or do you also do that on violin?

Actually it's both. I've been writing some stuff recently for solo violin, which might come out eventually. It's really a mixture of stuff. With producers as well, I've got a project with Nathan Britton so

we've been doing some stuff together, during lockdown, sending various things to one another. So it's a mix of stuff. I don't know if I have a formula in that respect.

I've got some projects that I'm starting to think about using loop pedals, and layering up tracks with just solo violin. That's the thing that's on the go at the moment. I'm planning on doing some videos with Duncan Eagles. We're both looping stuff to create tracks. We don't have the opportunity and we're not able to do much live band work so that's a way of creating tracks in these weird times.

When you started playing jazz violin were you applying what you knew already from playing the piano?

I think so. That's really true. That's what I'm doing even if it's subconsciously, not deliberately. It just turned out like that. Obviously I'm quite well known on piano so all that experience that I picked up from doing that, I'm just automatically putting that into the violin. It just feels really inspiring, being in an inspired state.

For more information on Benet McLean and his violin quintet:

www.benetmclean.com

Big Band Scene

Patrick Billingham



By now, step one of the roadmap out of lockdown should be complete. Schools have been open for nearly a month and, among other things, groups of up to six consenting adults from different households may meet for outside recreation.

I may have got it right last month suggesting that big bands could be back in business by June. Websites of venues around the county show variations of the same dismal message for 2021. No events are planned. With one exception. Eastbourne bandstand have published a provisional programme for their Big Band & Swing Sound season starting Monday 5th July. Perhaps they know something the rest of us don't. Let's hope so.

The vast majority of big bands have compositions such as *Hayburner*, *My Cherie Amour*, *The Queen Bee* and *Basie Straight Ahead* in their pads as well as arrangements of other composers' work such as *Ja-Da*, *Jumpin' At The Woodside*, *Shiny Stockings* and *Splanky*. All the output of Sammy Nestico, who died in January, aged 96.

His composing and arranging career covered more than 70 years, producing several hundred charts. During this time the tools of his trade evolved from pencil and paper to computer, synthesizer and MIDI.

There are, of course, many other well known big band arrangers, such as Bill Holman, Jerry Gray, Billy May and Dave Wolpe to name but a few. What

makes him stand out from the others, besides the length of his career and the quantity of his output?

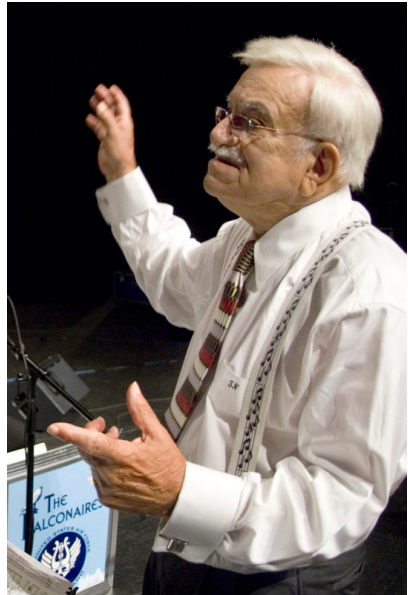
In his book, *The Complete Arranger*, first published in 1993, he outlines his philosophy. His aim was to make his music enjoyable, both to listen to and to play. Rather than aiming for intellectual exhibitionism. He recognised that the bulk of those playing his charts were likely to be high school, rather than just the full time professional, bands.

Early in his career, unable to find a teacher to meet his particular needs, he made a point of listening carefully to records of two of his favourite arrangers, Bill Finnegan and Nelson Riddle, in order to pay attention to how good writing worked, and why it worked. So that his own style became more conscious and more confident. In his words, example teaches best.

He looked beyond jazz and swing, and listened to works by the likes of Ravel, Debussy, Tchaikowsky and Stravinsky, while following the scores.

He pursued every opportunity to speak with experienced instrumentalists, trying to absorb as much knowledge and information as he could get from them. So he got to know the difference between difficult, awkward and impossible. When choosing a key, he was aware that most vocalists prefer not to stretch to the very outer limits of their range.

In his early writing he invariably used what he called the 'hit and miss' method, slow process that it is, learning as much from his 'misses' as he did from his 'hits'.



Sammy Nestico in 2006 (Master Sgt Jack Braden USAF)

He was a perfectionist. Even when he was convinced that his current arrangement was on target, he would still find room for improvement in the previous one. When he completed a score, he reviewed it several times, searching for anything that might confuse the picture and detract from the clarity of the music. As he wrote, the eraser on his pencil was worn flat by the end of the day.

Sammy has gone; his music lives on.

Next month: Whatever news there is with, perhaps, another big band profile. If there is anything such as feedback on this column, that you would like me to include in May's Big Band Scene, please send it to me by Monday April 12th. My email address is g8aac@yahoo.co.uk.

Album Reviews



Sam Braysher

Dance Little Lady, Dance Little Man
(Unit Records)

Sam Braysher has long ploughed his own furrow across the crowded field of contemporary jazz, maintaining a profile that's engaged with multiple European, American and UK scenes and sounds while never being exactly a part of any of them. His duo project with NYC pianist Michael Kamen excavated some of the Broadway roots of the Great American Songbook, managing to position itself deeply within the tradition, yet taking a tangent from its current iterations: this new project investigates a similarly mainstream set of compositions but re-examines them in a way that's different but just as subtly individualistic and rewarding. The line-up reflects the current vogue for chordless trios, and the touchstone must surely be Lee Konitz's seminal *In Motion* recording with the same format. Braysher's alto sax, clear and sweet-toned yet resolutely unsentimental, seems to be a direct inheritor of the Konitz style, but the accompaniment provided by Euro-jazz lynchpin Jorge Rossy (who also played with Konitz)

and the UK's Tom Farmer (best known as part of the Empirical collective) is resolutely modern, carefully arranged in a manner that masks its intelligence under an appearance of ingenuous simplicity. The challenge seems to have been to retain a directness, intelligence and freshness no matter how over-worked or unpromisingly mainstream the material. Check their take on *One Note Samba* - it avoids all the clichés of supper-club bossa nova while still retaining the light-touch airy accessibility of the original. *Heart And Soul* jokily reproduces the classic two-finger piano motif ingrained into the psyche of generations of teachers and schoolchildren, but revives it in context through sheer conviction; *Reflection* (from Disney's *Mulan* movie) is made to fit right into the timeless repertoire; *Walking The Dog* uses a bassline so foundationally basic that it almost takes on an abstract quality against Rossy's ingenious drum solo; *This Nearly Was Mine* adds marimba for an Arthur Lyman feel, yet doesn't sound remotely like muzak. Farmer's bass is pin-point precise and accurate, with a preternaturally clean rounded tone that recalls Dave Holland. A triumph of intelligence and sentiment from all in this subtly stand-out recording, with a deceptive simplicity that reveals new depths with each listen.

Eddie Myer

Sam Braysher, alto saxophone; Tom Farmer, double bass; Jorge Rossy, drums, vibraphone.



Avishai Cohen
Two Roses
(naïve / believe)

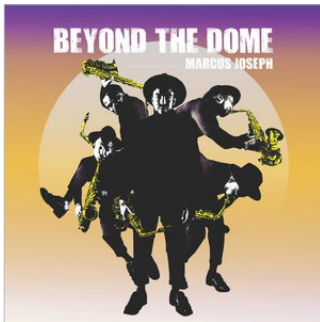
If there is one modern jazz artist who in the true spirit of jazz music is always searching and constantly evolving their sound, it has to be Israeli bass virtuoso and jazz giant Avishai Cohen. Ever since arriving from his native Israel into the thriving jazz scene of New York in the mid nineties, Cohen quickly became an up and coming figure playing in the trio of the late fusion master Chick Corea and going on to release a hefty number of albums as leader. Whether it's his pioneering work with his own trio or the soulful instrumental and vocal arrangements of classic latino repertoire with a larger ensemble, fans of Cohen's music are always left guessing what to expect next from the 'Miles Davis of Israeli jazz'. *Two Roses*, the new 2021 release from Cohen on French label naïve is the first album which sees the composer explore the realms of symphonic music interweaving this time honoured style with his own more familiar musical approaches. On this record the music is brought to life by the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Alexander Hanson alongside Cohen's own trio featuring pianist Elchin

Shirinov and longtime collaborator and drum legend Mark Guiliana. Cohen has previously expressed his appreciation of classical music and composers like J.S Bach and Erik Satie to name a few and this deep love of the classical idiom is immediately felt in the opening track, *Almah Sleeping*. This large scale symphonic reworking of the tune written by Cohen for his 2015 trio album *From Darkness* is thickly layered in orchestral sounds with voluminous swelling strings and soft wind accompaniment bringing an almost impressionistic atmosphere similar to that of Ravel or Debussy. The opening track is quite the juxtaposition of what comes next in the second track entitled *When I'm Falling*, which features Cohen on lead vocals with both trio and orchestra in tow, in a manner that puts the music closer to the realms of pop. These musical contrasts are ever present throughout the album with some tracks really evoking the sounds and moods so associated with classical music, while others contain a sense of the styles more closely associated with Cohen's unique sound. The repertoire is a rich mix of originals, latino classics and even an arrangement of the classic jazz standard *Nature Boy*. While the music is definitely more focused on the orchestral arrangements and Cohen's vocals, there is still some beautiful soloing and comping in the true jazz fashion from all members of the trio. The balance of changes in dynamics between orchestra and trio is very well done and rarely too sudden. In some places there is the feeling of too much of a stark contrast between sections, but this is felt very rarely throughout the album and is something that Cohen has clearly taken into consideration. It is a hard

task bringing together the soft sound of the trio and the mighty sound of the Western classical orchestra as has been shown by previous artists who have attempted a marriage of the two, most notably 1966's *Bill Evans Trio with Symphony Orchestra*. However, like Evans before him, Cohen has shown that it can be done, and has done so in a way that sees both parties complement each other whilst bringing a greater depth to the music.

George Richardson

Avishai Cohen, bassist, arranger, composer; Elchin Shirinov, piano; Mark Guiliiana, drums; Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Alexander Hanson.



Marcus Joseph
Beyond the Dome
(Jazz Re:freshed)

Leicester native Marcus Joseph has already racked up a wide-ranging set of musical experiences, from youth orchestras to stints as hip-hop DJ and MC, to jazz studies at Leeds, to fronting his own nu-jazz crossover band Major Ruse. This is his second solo recording, a big ambitious project with a cast list that reads like

a who's who of the UK's young diverse jazz talent, combining jazzy solos, lush strings, spoken word, and punchy grooves courtesy of Sons Of Kemet team members Theon Cross and Eddie Hicks. Some of the music fits into the Kemet mould: driving Black Atlantic rhythms from Cross and Hicks serve as a base for raggedly energetic wind and brass charts with impassioned solos. It's nice to hear veteran Tony Kofi tearing it up on baritone alongside the young bloods on *Challenge Day*, while Cross sibling Nathaniel takes honours on trombone for the reggae flavoured *Old Flame* and Joseph himself adds succinct alto sax and words over the driving denbow of *Arrival Of The Giants*. Other tracks are built on the lush chording of Lorenz Okell-Osengor's Rhodes and Wayne Matthews' bass guitar for a more retro jazz-funk flavour, with Ife Ogunjobi busting out some neat Lee Morgan chops on *Puzzle Paradigm* alongside Josephs' acerbically compelling solo. *What If* adds strings and guest vocalist Randolph Matthews for a nu-jazz/soul crossover with conscious lyrics dealing with themes of ancestry and self-empowerment. This album takes its place beside Seed Ensemble's *Driftglass*, Sons Of Kemet's *Your Queen Is A Reptile* and Zara McFarlane's *Arise* as part of the emergent sound of multi-cultural UK jazz and is a worthy addition to that company.

Eddie Myer

Marcus Joseph, alto saxophone, vocals; Sheila Maurice-Grey, trumpet; Theon Cross, tuba; Eddie Hick, drums; Lorenz Okell-Osengor; keyboard; Wayne Matthews, bass; Nathaniel Cross, trombone; Tony Kofi, baritone

saxophone; Benjamin Kwasi Burrell, arranger; Ife Ogunjobi, trumpet; Randolph Matthews, vocals; Sophie Cameron, cello; Jan Regulski, violin; Carol Hultmark, viola; Deidre Cooper, violin; Blasio Kavuma, string arrangements.



Robert Kessler Trio
Bloodline
(GLM Music EC 590-2)

Born in Berlin during 1984, German guitarist Robert Kessler's recording career really took off with his debut album *Jasmin* some ten years ago, that was nominated in his country's 'Jazz Album of the Year' contest in 2000. With an education at The Conservatory of Music and Berlin Jazz Institute, he soon became a first call session musician within the worlds of blues, pop and world music while developing his jazz career with his own bands and as a sideman. He teaches and runs workshops at The Jazz Institute and over the years has become a highly acclaimed composer within the European contemporary jazz scene. For this album he was able to call upon long term compatriots Andreas Henze on double bass and the superb drummer Tobias Backhaus who has recent experience with the

likes of The NDR Big Band, British pianist Gwilym Simcock and The Dresden Symphony Orchestra.

The guitarist's style has evolved over the years, from his bluesy delivery of the early times to a hugely sophisticated and modernistic approach, which is an ideal partner for his own highly creative, personal and far reaching compositions that fill most of this new album. There is a fine sense of melodic improvisation going on here during the six original pieces and one great standard. The trio are always singing from the same hymn sheet, it all fits very tightly together, but most importantly there is always time and space for the leader to stretch out and express himself as each theme develops. The dynamism of the bass and drums immediately comes to light on the opener *Jesaja* where bass man Andreas Henze lays down a strong pulse and contributes a fine solo, while drummer Tobias Backhaus plays with the freedom and adventure that well reflects his ever growing stature within the music. Whether it's on the romantically tinged and lilting ballad *Theo*, the upbeat and memorable theme of *Mann Mann*, or the minimalist and reflective *White Lake* there is a lasting quality about the trio with new delights emerging on this disc with every repeated playing. When it comes to the reprise of a great standard only a limited number of musicians seem to be able to stamp their own personality upon them, but in this case a rather sideways look at the classic jazz standard *Along Came Betty* written by Benny Golson back in 1958, when he was a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers is an absolute gem, bringing new angles to a great tune, but paying due respect to the original at all times.

Strangely the title cut *Bloodline* is held back to near the end of the album, it's an adventurous piece, with a strong melodic line and includes a fine drum break by the talented Tobias Backhaus that leaves a lasting impression on the listener's mind. The set ends with the more sombre and mysterious *Mach Die Aeuglein Wieder Auf* highlighting both the diversity of the trio's playing style and the quality of the leader's composing skills.

Jim Burlong

Robert Kessler, guitar; Andreas Henze, bass; Tobias Backhaus, drums.



Yoko Miwa Trio
Songs Of Joy
(Ubuntu Music UBU0057)

Miwa is a classically trained pianist who moved to Boston to pursue a love of jazz that she'd developed in her native Kobe, winning a scholarship to Berklee that enabled her to continue her studies after Kobe Conservatory was destroyed in the 1995 earthquake. She's carved out quite a reputation since then, with a CV that now includes Sheila Jordan, Slide Hampton, Arturo

Sandoval, George Garzone, Jon Faddis, Jerry Bergonzi, Esperanza Spalding, Terri Lyne Carrington, Kevin Mahogany, John Lockwood and Johnathan Blake among others. This trio album marks her Ubuntu debut, and her own tastes seem a clear match for the label's eclectic, accessible personality. There's an unusual choice of covers from outside the usual jazz repertoire: Richie Haven's *Freedom* provides the basis for a thunderous modal workout with impressive contributions from her longtime collaborator Goulding and Will Slater wielding his bow to dramatic effect, while the title track is from frequent Beatles collaborator Billy Preston, with Miwa keeping the harmonic and melodic directness of the original. Miwa's originals fit within well-established mainstream templates, from the noirish latin-fusion feel of *Largo Desolato* to the hip minor blues feel of *Small Talk*, the breezy bossa nova of *The Rainbirds* and the Monk-isms of *Think Of One*, but each contains enough of her own personality to avoid cliché. Miwa has been endorsed by Ahmad Jamal and you can see why: she uses to keyboard to build drama and tension on familiar forms, always keeping anchored to the melody, with a powerful left hand to build excitement; she's not afraid of a direct melody artfully harmonised, as the sweetly swinging *Inside A Dream* illustrates. The overall impression is of a powerful virtuosity operating hand in hand with a natural good taste.

Eddie Myer

Yoko Miwa, piano; Scott Goulding, drums; Will Slater, bass; Brad Barrett, bass (track 11).



Patrick Naylor
Winter Dream
(Beeboss Records BBCD2030)

Guitarist and composer Naylor has a rewarding parallel career playing sessions for film and TV scores and one wonders if this has bled over into his own music making - the entire album manages to be simultaneously unobtrusive yet highly evocative, setting a powerful mood without insisting too strongly on what that mood should be. Naylor is a thoughtful, melodic improviser on his instrument, his light-fingered, cleanly articulated lines inviting the inevitable comparison with the tradition of what one might call the 'atmospheric turn' of jazz guitar in the late 1970s, after Metheny et al moved it away from amplified histrionics and reinstated the primacy of melody and the instrument's links to such jazz-peripheral forms as Americana and bossa nova. The compositions are artfully constructed, each with a nicely judged harmonic or rhythmic twist to keep things interesting, yet maintaining a constant mood of wistful, poised introspection. Milo Fell on drums is a pivotal member here, maintaining exactly the right level of dynamic control to inject the necessary energy while always allowing the subtle nuances of everyone's performance to come

through; the almost spectral funk of *Do I Know You* could have become a bombastic fusion groove workout but Fell, bassist Jakub Cywinski and producer/keys man Dave Beebee maintain a perfect poise while still delivering a fully committed, utterly engaging performance. Both Ian East and Julian Costello are well chosen frontline partners for Naylor, matching his careful, sincere delivery. *Almost Through* in particular has a filmic quality: *Tory Drug Off* is another exercise in balancing groove and restraint; *B For Blues* lets East show off his high-level post-bop chops; *Rugby Street* closes with a feature for the virtuosic Cywinski to show off his deep, rich tone. This is an outstanding collection of highly atmospheric, beautifully poised pieces that should tear it up on the streaming playlists.

Eddie Myer

Patrick Naylor, guitar; Ian East, tenor sax; Julian Costello, soprano sax; David Beebee, piano; Jakub Cywinski - bass; Milo Fell, drums.





Shez Raja

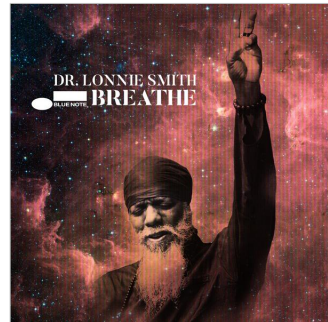
Tales from The Punjab
(Ubuntu Music UBU0077)

Shez Raja has established an outsize presence on the UK fusion scene, with his trademark white Kangol cap and Fodera bass guitar, and a back catalogue of album releases that lists such fusion luminaries as Wayne Krantz, Mike Stern and Randy Brecker among the cast list. This album takes a quieter, more reflective route as Raja sets out to explore the music of his Punjabi heritage with a set of collaborations with an impressive cast of South Asian musicians, from young virtuoso Zohaib Hassan to veteran classical players Ahsan Papu and Kashif Ali Dani. With Raja's rich trebly bass guitar the only electrically amplified instrument, there is space for some finely nuanced dynamic interplay between the musicians on tunes that range from the still introspection of *Angel's Tears* to the quietly but urgently pulsating *Adventures In The City Of Wonders*. Fiza Haider's clear vocals combine with sarangi to enchanting effect on *Mantra* over Raja's chord riffs. Attempts to marry South Asian music and jazz rock will inevitably invite comparison with heavy hitters like Trilok Gurtiu and John McLaughlin, and *Maharaja* has a

double-tracked Raja accompanying his own soloing over frantic percussion and what sounds like an electric sarangi for a more intense Mahavishnu-style fusion experience, but generally the mood is one of meditative calm, with Papu's bansuri flute weaving webs of delight on the closing *Enlightenment*. A refreshing aural tonic for lock-down life.

Eddie Myer

Shez Raja, bass guitar; Fiza Haider, vocals; Ahsan Papu, bansuri; Zohaib Hassan, sarangi; Kashif Ali Dani, tabla; Qamar Abbas, cajon.



Dr. Lonnie Smith

Breathe
(Blue Note Records)

A new release by the iconic 78 year old New York organist Dr Lonnie Smith is always keenly anticipated, and this his third since returning to the Blue Note label after nearly 50 years absence is no exception. During his lengthy career the Hammond B3 specialist has recorded thirty albums as a leader and appeared on very many other recordings, notably with the likes of saxophonist Lou Donaldson, guitarist George Benson and bassist Red

Holloway. Now a N.E.A. Jazz Master, he was voted Organist of the Year no less than nine times by The Jazz Journalists Association since 2003. A documentary film showcasing the talents of this remarkable and forward thinking musician entitled *Dr B3 The Soul Of The Music* by the award winning Canadian film maker Ed Barreveld was nearing completion as of December last year.

Six of the eight tracks on this almost one hour long, highly entertaining album were recorded during the organists 75th birthday celebrations at The Jazz Standard club in New York City during 2017. That session forms the centre piece of the recording but is top and tailed by two studio takes of the organ, guitar and drums trio with guest vocalist Iggy Pop. Jazz purists should have no concern about the presence of this 73 year old artist from Michigan once known as 'The Godfather of Punk' for his time with The Stooges and his work with the late great David Bowie, as he fits perfectly into the context of the recording with minimalistic and subdued renderings of the Timmy Thomas tune *Why Can't We Live Together* and Donovan's 1966 hit *Sunshine Superman*. It is however the club session that really strikes home, most of the tunes are from the leaders pen and show great originality in both their concepts and execution. The doctor's organ sound is almost always understated and full of intriguing subtle harmonies, the one exception being on the more up-beat *Bright Eyes* where overtones of the ever popular Jimmy Smith are evident, but even this is somewhat a slow burner and contains one of a number of telling solo passages during the set from the North Carolinian saxophonist John Ellis. All

the numbers have an inbuilt delicacy about them without ever becoming trite or sentimental in any way. A good example of this is the rather strangely titled *Track 9*, which although intricate in parts has a strong searching quality about it and brings a stratospheric interlude from trumpet man Sean Jones to the fore alongside a telling contribution from the baritone of ex Roy Hargrove Big Band saxophonist Jason Marshall. A key component of the whole ambient sound of the set is the performance throughout of guitarist Jonathan Kreisberg who has now been in the band for over eleven years and supplies both superb single note runs as well as having a strong affinity when exchanging ideas with the leader. This is particularly so when the band reverts to the trio mode, such as on the twelve minute *World Weeps*, a truly stunning and sensitive piece to begin with that builds layers of tension as the tempo and volume increases to an almost angry level as it progresses before once more dropping down into more calmer waters. Proceedings are further enhanced on one track by the presence of the mezzo soprano Alicia Olatuja, a vocalist more than comfortable in a wide range of settings from The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir to The Juilliard Jazz Ensemble, who engrained her reputation considerably with a well publicised performance at Barack Obama's second presidential inauguration. Here she quite obviously brings the house down on Meryl Konenigsberg's poignant lyrics to Lonnie Smith's excellent composition *Pilgrimage*. In summary this is a very fine album, not just for the performances of the main soloists but also for the tight ensemble sound when the band are

in septet mode and the stunning but sensitive drumming of Johnathan Blake from first to last. Although it is only March it is very likely that this disc will at least be pencilled in on some people's top ten jazz albums of 2021.

Jim Burlong

Dr. Lonnie Smith, Hammond B3 Organ; Sean Jones, trumpet; Robin Eubanks, trombone; John Ellis, tenor; Jason Marshall, baritone; Jonathan Kreisberg, guitar; Johnathan Blake, drums. Guest vocalists, Iggy Pop and Alicia Olatuja.



Stefanos Tsourelis
The Wanderer
(via Bandcamp)

This elegant album of spacious fusion features Tsourelis' precise, cleanly articulated single note lines and oblique chordal colours, all clearly drawn from a line of guitarists from Metheny to Mick Goodrick to John Abercrombie, but with some intriguing compositional twists that are all his own. The aptly named *Interplay* has Tsourelis on acoustic playing pensive arpeggios that suddenly burst into frantic unisons

with Dave Jones' smooth-toned bass guitar, reminiscent of the virtuosic Bouzouki tradition. *El Divo* has more of a down-home flavour, with some politely greasy backbeat work from the ever excellent Eric Ford and loads of tricky breaks to enliven proceedings, *Elegant Beauty* is a slick LA sounding Larry Carlton strut, and *The Wanderer* has Tsourelis picking up the electric for a full-bodied ballad exploration with contemporary indie-american voicings incorporated in a manner reminiscent of Julian Lage. So far, so Compleat Modern Guitarist, but Tsourelis has other tricks up his sleeve as well: both *Calypso* and *Moments* feature him on the oud, using its deep sonority and microtonal capacity to invigorating effect while steering well clear of shallow orientalism, and *Waves* closes with a multitracked duet where he unites all the above influences. Both Jones and Ford provided sympathetic accompaniment and stimulating solo features when required: this is a very superior product from a great band.

Eddie Myer

Stefanos Tsourelis, guitar, oud; Dave Jones, bass guitar; Eric Ford, drums.





Amanda Whiting
After Dark
(JazzMan Records)

The harp as a solo instrument outside the realms of western classical music has always been somewhat of a rarity, with a few expectations within the jazz world - most notably the swinging harp playing of Dorothy Ashby and the spiritualistic innovations that Alice Coltrane made on the instrument. However, recent times have seen a rise in the number of harp players working within the jazz field, with harp player Rachael Gladwin being an almost permanent feature in the music of the Gondwana Orchestra, and harpist and vocalist Tara Minton only recently releasing an album as leader. Which brings us to the brand new release by harp player and band leader Amanda Whiting whose exciting playing and beautiful arrangements show another side to the harp as a solo instrument. Far from being a soft and sublime sound usually associated with harp playing, the focus here is more on making the harp really speak out as a solo instrument in jazz. The album entitled *After Dark* features mainly a trio of Aidan Thorne on double bass, John Reynolds on drums and lead by Whiting on the harp. This well crafted

album is focused mainly around two styles of jazz harp playing, the straight ahead swing style made famous by Dorothy Ashby, most notably on her 1958 release *Hip Harp*, and also the soft meditative style so present in the music of Alice Coltrane. The album is a healthy mix of both approaches with a few modern aspects such as electronic effects interspersed evocatively in her music. The guest feature of modern jazz flute legend Chip Wickham is also a nice addition to the music bringing his signature sound to a few chosen pieces on the album, with the combination of flute and harp also bringing to mind the collaboration between Ashby and flautist Frank Wess. Highlights of the album for me have to be *Strut Your Stuff* with its heavy sense of swing and also the final track *Back To It* played in a bossa nova style which played on the harp is new to my ears but done so here to great effect. Also a shout out must be given to the other two members of the ensemble, as both Thorne and Reynolds make a solid rhythm section throughout the duration of the album and never falter from supporting the topline. This is a soulful and expressive release from Amanda Whiting and a great example of what the harp is capable of, as both a lead and solo instrument in jazz music.

George Richardson

Amanda Whiting, harp; John Reynolds, drums; Aidan Thorne, bass. Guest: Chip Wickham, flute.

Jazz Essentials

Miles Davis

A Tribute to Jack Johnson
(Columbia)

I've already raved about *In A Silent Way*, Miles Davis's gentle introduction to jazz rock, and everyone else raves about *Bitches Brew*, the magisterial double album that really kicked off the revolution. But the album that can truly be said to epitomise jazz rock in all its rhythmic drive and hard-wired energy is a lesser-known soundtrack to a little-watched documentary film that was minimally promoted when it was appeared in February 1971.

Jack Johnson was the first African American world heavyweight boxing champion (1908–15), a socialite whose marriage to a white woman landed him in gaol for violating the Mann Act that forbade the transportation of a woman across state lines for immoral purposes. A prison sentence for which he was formally pardoned in 2018 by a real crook called President Trump. In 1970 boxing promoter Bill Cayton produced a documentary about the boxer and, knowing Miles's interest in boxing, asked if he would record the soundtrack. Miles readily agreed, and got together Steve Grossman on soprano sax, Herbie Hancock on Farfisa organ, an instrument he had never played before, 18-year-old Michael Henderson, latterly of Stevie Wonder's band, on electric bass, Billy Cobham on drums, and Doncaster's finest, John McLaughlin, on electric guitar.

The album's two tracks – *Right Off* and *Yesternow*, each filling a side of vinyl – consist of various takes and solos later spliced together by



Miles's long-time producer Teo Macero. *Right Off* contains a riff borrowed from Sly Stone, *Yesternow* a bassline from James Brown and Miles's solo from *In A Silent Way*. But there is nothing derivative here.

Right Off starts as an impromptu jam session between McLaughlin, Henderson and Cobham into which Miles bursts, playing his best high-register, open trumpet and one of his longest, most joyous solos ever. This is electric jazz rock personified, a sonic explosion to kick up a storm. *Yesternow* is initially more contemplative but slowly intensifies, the whole album ending with a spoken eulogy to the champion boxer.

For reasons unknown, Columbia records put all its efforts into promoting the meandering *Miles Davis at Fillmore*, released the previous October. They also used the wrong cover, the stylized artwork of Johnson in his car surrounded by flapper friends later replaced by an atmospheric black and white photo of Miles in full flow. Yet *A Tribute to Jack Johnson* remains a highlight of Miles's long career, the trumpeter's most brazen and effective venture into rock music.

Simon Adams



The Verdict in 2018 by Lisa Wormsley

Live Streams

Tristan Banks has taken over The Verdict and will be presenting live streams from the club. Details at <https://verdictjazz.co.uk>

606 Club

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<https://www.youtube.com/c/RonnieScottsClub>

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<https://newgenerationjazz.co.uk/>

More details of performances and live streams can be found on our listings page: www.sussexjazzmag.com/listings

Details are assumed to be correct at the time of publication.

Pete Recommends...

Thelonious Monk - In Other Hands



One or two readers may recognise this as the title of a presentation which I gave many years ago to the Sussex Jazz Appreciation Society. Recently, while checking my very substantial collection of Monk's recordings, I thought about the various 'tribute' albums which have been produced over the years. I also sought some advice from Google on this topic. I came across several interesting lists. So, this month I am recommending a selection of the best of these albums as judged by me, and by some critics on Google:

1. Thelonica by The Tommy Flanagan Trio

This is my favourite, with some superb interpretations. My first choice would be a beautiful version of *Panonica*.

Excellent support by George Mraz, bass and Art Taylor, drums.

2. Reflections by The Steve Lacy Quartet.

Steve was among the first to offer his own selection from Monk's compositions. His remains one of the very best. He is aided here by pianist Mal Waldron, another Monk

enthusiast, and the great Elvin Jones is on drums. The title track is one of my favourite Monk compositions.

3. Tracey/Wellins Play Monk

I really enjoy this album. Bobby and Stan had a deep understanding and appreciation of Monk's music. This is evident in a very straight reading of *Monk's Mood*. My favourite track is *Blues Bolivar*. Yes, it is just a blues, but Bobby and Stan have such a strong feeling for Monk's music that every bar sustains the mood set by the theme.



4. Monk in Motian

This is a recent discovery for me, which I have added to my Monk Collection. Drummer Paul Motian is a very dedicated Monk fan. (Did anyone like me catch his appearance at the Sallis Benney some years ago?) He is joined by guitarist Bill Frisell and saxophonist Joe Lovano for a tightly-knit trio performance which respects the unique quality of Monk's tunes.



5. Rumba Para Monk by Jerry Gonzalez

I am still exploring this album of Latin American versions of Monk tunes. It is very unusual but certainly deserves our interest and respect. To date I have enjoyed a fine version of *Reflections*, a successful Latinization of *Nutty* and an excellent *Bye Ya*. It is easy to find on YouTube.

Some very fine performances to explore. I am a little ashamed that I have not included the album, *Four in One* by Sphere, a short-lived tribute group led by pianist Kenny Barron and Monk's long-term associate, Charlie Rouse. I have owned the album for years, but I am disappointed by the choice of tunes. Even so, add it to the list. Perhaps someone will let me know whether they have enjoyed it more than me.

Good hunting.

Pete Batten

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