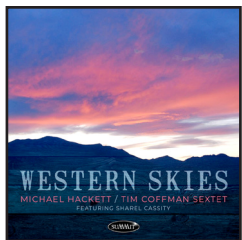


ALBUM REVIEWS



Western Skies (featuring Sharel Cassity)
Michael Hackett/Tim Coffman Sextet (Summit)
Precarious Towers
Johannes Wallmann (Shifting Paradigm)
by George Kanzler

Alto saxophonist Sharel Cassity hit the Big Apple jazz scene running after garnering a Masters degree from The Juilliard School in 2007. For the next decade she held down chairs in such top New York bands as the Dizzy Gillespie All Star Big Band as well as big bands led by Jimmy Heath, Nicholas Payton and Roy Hargrove. She also held the first alto chair in Sherrie Maricle's all-female DIVA Jazz Orchestra from 2007-13. In 2017 Cassity moved to Chicago and began teaching at colleges in the area, as well as at University of Wisconsin-Madison. These two albums, led by college jazz educators in the Chicago and Madison area, both feature her.

Western Skies, which could more accurately be called "Mid-Western Skies", is co-led by trumpeter Michael Hackett and trombonist Tim Coffman, both alumni of David Baker's renowned jazz program at Indiana University, the band with Cassity, Jeremy Kahn (piano, keyboards), Christian Dillingham (bass) and Bob Rummage (drums). Hackett wrote four and arranged one other of the eight tracks, with Coffman arranging two and writing the other. Some of the tracks—"Blues for MH", "Esox Fables", the title ballad—are straightahead mainstream modern, typical of the jazz produced in middle American colleges, but elevated by the cogent solos of the co-leaders and Cassity. Three tracks are enlivened by two added AfroLatin percussionists, Arno Gonzalez (timbale, guiro) and Tony Castañeda (congas), the standout a Hackett salsa arrangement of McCoy Tyner's "You Taught My Heart to Sing". Two of those tunes and the power ballad closer, "We the People", feature Kahn on electric keyboard while the latter also features Cassity in two compelling solos.

Precarious Towers is from a quintet led by pianist Johannes Wallmann, Director of Jazz Studies at University of Wisconsin, Madison, where Cassity has also taught. Rounding out the band are vibraphonist Mitch Shiner, bassist John Christensen and drummer Devin Drobka. Aside from a medium swing version of the Matt Dennis-Earl Brent standard "Angel Eyes" and a fetching ballad, "Try to Remember" from Wallmann, all the other tunes (by Wallmann) employ distinctive, differing rhythmic patterns. "McCoy" borrows a favorite ostinato of McCoy Tyner's; a prominent snare keeps a downbeat on the semi-rubato "December"; ticking brushes and low piano figures provide the undercurrent to "Saturday Night Meat Raffle" and racing drums 8/8s pair with a slower bass line beneath "Never Pet A Burning Dog".

Cassity is featured more on this than on *Western Skies*, her ballad playing luminescent on "Try to Remember". A three-part suite, "Pandemica", stands out for its challenging singularity, from an opening, somnolent trio movement ("Quiet Out There") through a midtempo swinging second ("Unreliable Narrator") to a bouncing, syncopated final section ("Defeat and Imprison the Conman Strongman") culminating in alto soaring over full tilt rhythm and vibraphone.

For more information, visit summitrecords.com and shiftingparadigmrecords.com. Sharel Cassity is at *Blue Note* Jan. 2nd-8th with the Dizzy Gillespie Afro-Latin Experience. See Calendar.



Atalaya
Dezron Douglas (International Anthem)
by George Grella

One of the current, widespread problems with new jazz albums is that so many of them are too long, 45 minutes of terrific music padded—because it can be done—with 15-30 minutes of second-rate material. The results are unsatisfying.

So it is more than a little unbalancing to point out that bassist Dezron Douglas' new album is too short! It is complete and whole, there is nothing missing, but so many of the tracks could go on much longer. That is how satisfying are the style and musicianship.

The band is saxophonist Emilio Modeste, pianist George Burton and drummer Joe Dyson, Jr. and they have a great ensemble sound. Right from the opening title track, they lay down the kind of pocket with a smooth, powerful pulse holding within it everything from a sense of agitation to a spiritual-jazz feeling of launching off from pedal tones. Bassist and drummer, especially, have a rapport that has something of the Charles Mingus-Dannie Richmond quality, playing with and off each other, holding down a bedrock conversation both trampoline and landing pad for saxophone and piano.

Modeste is a big part of this sound as well, with a tartness to his tone on all his horns setting him off from the current post-John Coltrane/Michael Brecker crowd. With Burton's big chords, the sheer sound of this band is a sensual pleasure. There is what to this Brooklyn listener seems to be a strong Chicago feel, a mix of last century's Chicago Underground cutting edge, but with a melodic style and expressive concern that updates the '70s Loft scene. If only there were more! The title track ends just as the listener yearns for expansion, as does "Rosé" and "More Coffee Please". Groove, color, inventiveness, spontaneity, it is all there. The energy is live, personal, even intimate, everything sounds fresh even with repeated listening.

The only subpar (in this context) track is "Weeping Birch" (sic), with vocalist Melvis Santa; so many details just don't fit such that it sounds like it needed one more take. As for the rest, the abundance of pleasures leaves one wanting much, much more.

For more information, visit intlanthem.com. Douglas is at *Bar Bayeux* Jan. 4th with Jaleel Shaw. See Calendar.



Fruition
Ivo Perelman/Matthew Shipp (ESP-Disk')
by Robert Bush

There are many potential adjectives one could employ when discussing the work of Ivo Perelman (tenor saxophone) and Matthew Shipp (piano). Lazy would not be among them. Each began making records in the late '80s and have since led or co-led more than 70 sessions. Just in terms of their duo work, *Fruition* represents the 18th collaboration. "We believe it's our

best effort so far," says Perelman, on the inside jacket.

Indeed, these two improvisors fit each other like fine gloves. They often create and operate on parallel lines, yet when they do cross over, the degree of empathic listening yields rich results. There are no empty histrionics or facile posturing, just pure communication. When, on the opening tune "Nine", Shipp conjures dark clouds of dense harmonies, Perelman responds with coos and sighs and a good deal of romantic melodicism that could have come from someone like Sonny Rollins in the early '60s.

Perelman also introduces a wide, quavering vibrato in "Thirteen", reminiscent of both Albert Ayler and Ben Webster while Shipp tattoos an insistent theme into the flesh of the material. Even though these players have earned their reputations as firebrands on the cutting edge, one can also hear a large swath of the tradition reflected in every cascading note and motif discovered in each other's company. One breathtaking moment occurs in "Seven", when the two land, seemingly by chance, into a brief quotation of Ornette Coleman's "Dancing In Your Head". Oftentimes, Perelman sends air coursing through the horn like the older masters and Shipp is always ready to respond. There are very few pianists of the post-Cecil Taylor continuum who can actualize in the moment the way that he does throughout this disc.

As it turns out, *Fruition* is very aptly titled. These conversations are the bounty of years of dialogue and contemplation. One can only hope that such meetings continue and that someone is there to document them. Perelman and Shipp are a timeless match.

For more information, visit espdisk.com. This project is at *The Stone* at *The New School* Jan. 5th. See Calendar.

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Michael Blake-*Combobulate* (Newvelle)
- Jakob Bro/Joe Lovano-*Once Around The Room: A Tribute to Paul Motian* (ECM)
- George Dumitriu-*Monk on Viola* (Evil Rabbit)
- Muriel Grossmann-*Universal Code* (Dreamland)
- Barry Guy and Friends-*Kraków 2018* (Not Two)
- David Haney/Julian Priester-*Live at Earshot* (Cadence)
- Inger Hannisdal-*North South East West* (Jazzland)
- Anton Ponomarev/Konstantin Korolev/Andrey Kim-*Teufelskeller* (WV Sorcerer Productions)
- Günter Baby Sommer/Raymond MacDonald-*Sounds, Songs & Other Noises* (Clean Feed)
- Jeong Lim Yang-*Zodiac Suite: Reassured* (Fresh Sound New Talent)

Laurence Donohue-Greene, Managing Editor

- Mihály Borbély Quartet-*Miracles of the Night* (BMC Records)
- Jakob Bro/Joe Lovano-*Once Around The Room: A Tribute to Paul Motian* (ECM)
- Avram Fefer Quartet-*Juba Lee* (Clean Feed)
- Satoko Fujii-*Hyaku: One Hundred Dreams* (Libra)
- Insomnia Brass Band-*Road Works* (Tiger Moon)
- Elvin Jones-*Revival: Live at Pookie's Pub* (Blue Note)
- Charles Lloyd-Trios-*Sacred Thread* (Blue Note)
- Jim Self-*My America 2: Destinations* (Basset Hound Music)
- Spaces Unfolding-*The Way We Speak* (Bead)
- Jeong Lim Yang-*Zodiac Suite: Reassured* (Fresh Sound New Talent)

Andrey Henkin, Editorial Director