

**Viktor Toth**  
***Popping Bopping***  
(BMC Records)

**Bela Szakcsi Lakatos**  
***Live At Mupa***  
(BMC Records)

**Gabor Gado Quartet**  
***Ungrund***  
(BMC Records)

During the past 20 years, the BMC (Budapest Music Centre) label has been quite significant in documenting jazz from Hungary. The music tends to range from post-bop to avant-garde and sometimes includes Americans as sidemen. Listening to BMC's valuable releases reminds one that jazz is very much a universal language, and notifies one that there is quite a bit of worthy music being created in Hungary.

Altoist Viktor Toth on *Popping Bopping* leads a pianoless quartet that at times is quite reminiscent of Ornette Coleman's early groups. Toth, trumpeter Bart Maris, bassist Matyas Szandai and drummer Robert Mehmet Ikiz perform six of the leader's originals. While the opening "Pocket-Ticket" could be a tribute to Ornette Coleman, the other selections sometimes contain more conventional swinging, electronics, sound explorations, and music inspired by other sources. Toth and Maris are both superior improvisers as are Szandai and Ikiz who are mostly heard in a supportive role. This colorful group deserves to be discovered by American listeners.

Bela Szakcsi Lakatos is a virtuosic pianist who on *Live At Mupa* holds his own with tenor-saxophonist Chris Potter, bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington. They perform four of Lakatos' originals, Keith Jarrett's "Rainbow" and "Round Midnight." The music is adventurous but tied to the jazz tradition, often swinging but never predictable. Lakatos has a very original style and he is never overshadowed by his famous sidemen, often inspiring them to play at their most intense and inventive.

Guitarist Gabor Gado explores many moods on *Ungrund*, from the introspective to the explosive. His quartet with tenor-saxophonist Matthieu Donarier, bassist Sebastien Boisseau and drummer Joe Quitzke welcomes Dave Liebman (playing tenor and soprano) to this dynamic live set. Whether interpreting Ravel's "Pavanne" or playing Gado's music, the interplay between the musicians, (even during the freest moments) is very impressive and stimulating.

Every country should have a jazz label on the level of BMC ([www.bmcrecords.hu](http://www.bmcrecords.hu)).

Scott Yanow

originally on [www.scottyanow.com/LAJazzScene.html](http://www.scottyanow.com/LAJazzScene.html) in May 2014