

Record Reviews



JOHN ABERCROMBIE QUARTET

UP AND COMING

Joy; Flipside; Sunday School; Up And Coming; Tears; Silver Circle; Nardis; Jumbles (47.16)

Abercrombie (g); Marc Copland (p); Drew Gress (b); Joey Baron (d). New York, April/May 2016.

ECM 572 3377

★★★★

Featuring the same quartet lineup, this is John Abercrombie's follow-up to his 2013 ECM recording 39 Steps. Over 40 years ago, Abercrombie and Copland were members of Chico Hamilton's quartet, although Copland was at that time going by his original name of Cohen and playing saxophone. The

JJ CONTENT

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rhythm section of Drew Gress and Joey Baron appeared on Abercrombie's 2012 ECM album *Within A Song*, along with Joe Lovano.

The opener, *Joy*, is a tranquil piece that could almost fit the description of chamber jazz but the album shouldn't be judged on this track alone since things soon begin to loosen up on subsequent numbers. *Flipside* begins with Abercrombie delicately quoting the first seven notes from the famous ascending chorus of George Gershwin's *Someone To Watch Over Me* before the tune breaks into a moderate to fast paced swinger.

Abercrombie's playing is typically precise and restrained, always avoiding the egotistical noodling to which solid-bodied electric guitarists are often ineluctably drawn. *Tears*, by Marc Copland, is an example of this subtlety as is Miles Davis's *Nardis*. The guitar and piano almost nonchalantly state the melody, following which the solos ensue. Drew Gress's bass is rich and resonant; the spaces in between the notes nearly approach dead air, but not quite, whilst Marc Copland's floridly lyrical piano elegantly carries the piece along.

Silver Circle, also penned by Copland, picks up a degree of visceral energy, particularly on Abercrombie's serpentine solo, egged along by Joey Baron's sizzling cymbals and an echo-enhanced drum coda. *Jumbles* benefits from a recurring and memorable vamp which permeates the number throughout. *Up And Coming* is a model of understatement, positively rewarding repeated plays.

Roger Farbey

CHET BAKER

AT ONKEL PÖ'S CARNEGIE HALL, HAMBURG 1979

CD1: *Love For Sale; You Can't Go Home Again; There'll Never Be Another You (50.03)*

CD2: *Black Eyes; Broken Wing (51.35)*

Baker (t, v); Phil Markowitz (p); Jean-Louis Rassinfosse (b); Charlie Rice (d). Hamburg, Germany. 2 April 1979.

Jazzline N77038

★★★★★

Many venues carry the name Carnegie Hall. Of course, one thinks first of the beautiful building with celebrated acoustics which stands on 7th Avenue in Manhattan midtown, between 55th Street and 56th Street. There are others – Carnegie Hall in Dumfermline, Fife, for instance. But Onkel Pö's Carnegie Hall is in Hamburg. Ancient in terms of jazz history, Onkel Pö's first licence dates from 1920.

From 1978 until his death in 1988, Chet Baker lived and played mostly in Europe. This CD offers a live club date before an appreciative German audience in the aforementioned Carnegie Hall, from the beginning of that period. Tracks are long. For instance, the length of *Black Eyes*, at almost 28 minutes, may seem a mite self-indulgent for some tastes, but in truth this offers beautiful brass playing of the highest order, simultaneously giving the sympathetic rhythm section musicians opportunity to stretch out as they would on a club date. Baker is in outstanding form, both in his trumpet playing and his scatting. The CD is well-recorded.

Booklet notes are both informative and entertaining, though the club owner's observations about audience behaviour may be resented by some teetotallers: "When it comes to drinking habits, there are two types of jazz



aficionados. Some drink everything they can lay their hands on, others sip one small bottle of water the whole evening long. Even worse for the sale of beverages were the free-jazz fans, usually teachers and social pedagogues. This lot brought the water bottles along from home". A CD representing Chet Baker at his best, being highly enjoyable and warmly recommended.

John Robert Brown

COUNT BASIE BIG BAND

LIVE IN BERLIN

In A Mellow Tone; Moon River; Misty; Corner Pocket; Count 'Em; Announcement Count Basie; Mr. Five By Five; I Want A Little Girl; I'm Coming, Virginia; The Swinging Shepherd Blues; The Midnight Sun Never Sets; I Needs To Bee'd With; Lil' Darlin'; One O'Clock Jump; Jumpin' At The Woodside (52.45)

Snooky Young, Al Aarons, Sonny Cohn, Don Rader, Ricky Fortunatus (t); Henry Coker, Grover Mitchell, Benny Powell, Urbie Green (tb); Marshall Royal (as); Eric Dixon (ts, fh); Frank Wess (as, fh); Frank Foster (ts); Charlie Fowlkes (bar); Freddie Green (g); Buddy Catlett (b); Sonny Payne (d); Basie (p); Jimmy Rushing (v). Berlin, 9 September 1963.

Jazzline N77026

★★★★

I doubt there are many septuagenarian JJ readers who are not also Basie buffs and they will feel right at home with this album

given that the bulk of the personnel, the selections, charts and Swiss watch precision the band brings to its attack replicate to the semitone what UK audiences witnessed live on the annual tours the band made to the UK during the late 50s/early 60s. Purists may argue that it was invariably Joe Williams who handled vocals back in the day whereas here it's Jimmy Rushing who hollers his way through *Mr. Five By Five, I Want A Little Girl* and *I'm Coming, Virginia* but that is, at best, a minor point.

The band at that time was defined by the beyond-brilliant 1957 album *The Atomic Mr. Basie* - 11 five-star compositions composed and arranged by Neal Hefti that swung all the way from a frantic *The Kid From Red Bank* to a gentle swinging *Lil' Darlin'*. The latter is included here and represents my only caveat as I find it a tad coarser than the ultra-smooth original. If smooth is your middle name look no further than Charlie Fowlkes's solo reading of *Misty*. In sum: if you've mislaid the code-word that will activate your own personal Tardis, worry not. Slip this in your CD player, press play and say hello to your salad days.

Leon Nock



ERALDO BERNOCCHI & PRAKASH SONTAKKE

INVISIBLE STRINGS

The Last Emperor Walked Alone; Will You Stay; From Star To Star; The Invisible Ferry; Sublime Skies; Bangalor Electric; Purple Yellow; Walking Backwards Again; The Unsaid (48.47)

Bernocchi (baritone guitar, elg, elec); Sontakke (lap steel guitar). Recording location & date unknown.

RareNoise 069

★★★★

CRITICS' CHOICE

The 10 CDs JJ critics most wanted to hear from this month's review pile

John Abercrombie	Up And Coming	ECM 572 3377
Dave Brubeck Qt With Paul Desmond	At The Sunset Center Carmel 1955	Solar 4569973
Chris Connor	The Complete Atlantic Singles 1956-60	Blue Moon 883
Sammy Davis Jr	With Marly Paich Dek-Tette & Orch	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 922
Med Flory	Go West Young Med!	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 923
Billie Holiday	The Last Albums	Essential Jazz Classics 55705
Julie London	Whatever Julie Wants	Fine And Mellow 610
Jan Lundgren	Potsdamer Platz	ACT 9831
Buddy Rich Septet With Kenny Barron	Very Live At Buddy's Place Complete	Phono 870270
Jimmy Smith/Lou Donaldson Quartet	Complete Studio Recordings	Phono 870271

Another unpredictable release from RareNoise. The only DNA that seems to run through their catalogue is quality of performance and being unafraid to pursue that quality wherever it leads. Not unusually, it leads us to uncategorisable releases like this. Eraldo Bernocchi is a guitarist and co-founder of RareNoise and often plays on some of the label's noisier projects such as *Obake* and *Metallic Taste of Blood*. Prakash Sontakke is a leading composer of Hindustani classical music who opts for lap steel, Hawaiian and other forms of slide guitar more often associated with the US.

This collaborative duo recording was mostly done at a distance, establishing a dialogue one idea (or response) at a time. And what a dialogue: the result is the most unique set of guitar duets I think I've ever heard. In many of the tracks (the opener, for example, or *Sublime Skies*) the improvisation and interplay seems rooted more in folk and roots music than any kind of jazz head-solo-head format. Guitar-wise, Bernocchi takes more of a back seat, using the processed instrument as more of a "sound tool" to furnish unobtrusively irresistible rhythms and electronic textures (*Purple Yellow*) rather than more traditional riffs and lead lines. Meanwhile Sontakke's sitar-ish, pure-toned lap steel creates an East-West atmosphere that draws on the heart of both traditions while firmly eschewing the clichés of either.

With an eye on a return collaboration, I have to say this feels to me like a first outing. *Sublime* as the Invisible Strings sound world is, I'm already looking forward to them revisiting and further expanding this peculiar ambience.

Dave Foxall

VINCENT BOURGEYX

SHORT TRIP

Short Trip; Abbey; I Got Lost In His Arms; In A Hurry; Choral; This Is New; While She Sleeps; Elephant's March; Cross Fingers; Tune Up; I've Grown Accustomed To His Face; June; For All We Know (72.38)

Bourgeyx (p); Matt Penman (b); Obed Calvaire (d); David Prez (ts); Sara Lazarus (v). Meudon, May 2016.

Fresh Sound New Talent FSNT 516

★★★★

Most of the tunes here were penned by the leader, and they're very good and varied, played by a very nice line-up. I particularly enjoyed the agile rhythm pairing of Penman and Calvaire, who seem very responsive to the soloists, whilst providing high-quality grooves at a wide range of tempos. The opener *Short Trip* is reminiscent of some of the work on Jason Rebello's 1990 debut album *A Clearer View*, with its tendency towards grooves that edge towards fusion, sometimes with unison running left-hand piano and bass lines amongst the overall texture.

I Got Lost In His Arms is the first of two vocal tracks, a nice ballad, well-sung by the France-based American Sara Lazarus, inducing a fluent solo from Bourgeyx. *In A Hurry* sees Bourgeyx initially launching off in a high-tempo Corea-like way, and Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin's *This Is New* kicks off at a similar lick, with Bourgeyx always seeming to have a higher gear available if he requires it in his solos.

The change of time signature and tempo of *While She Sleeps* provides some very brief respite, and it seems a shame that this isn't given time to develop fur-

ther. Penman gets solos on *Elephant's March* and the gently funky *Cross Fingers* amongst others, before the rhythmic reworking of Miles Davis's *Tune Up* builds to a thunderous climax with Calvaire's solo. Lazarus returns with *I've Grown Accustomed To His Face*, which almost feels like the last track, but Bourgeyx's solo *For All We Know* ultimately seems a fitting closer.

Dave Jones



DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET WITH PAUL DESMOND

AT THE SUNSET CENTER CARMEL 1955

(1) *Introduction; Gone With The Wind; Jeepers Creepers; I'll Never Smile Again; Brother Can You Spare A Dime?; The Trolley Song; Little Girl Blue; Take The 'A' Train;* (2) *Two Part Contention* (74.38)

(1) Desmond (as); Brubeck (p); Bob Bates (b); Joe Dodge (d). Sunset Center, 26 June 1955. (2) as (1) Norman Bates (b) replaces Bob Bates. Basin Street, NYC, 18 August 1956.

Solar 4569973

★★★★

In 2014 Solar issued a previously unreleased Dave Brubeck quartet concert from the Pennsylvania State University recorded in March 1955 (CD 4569948). Their latest release from the venue where Erroll Garner recorded his classic *Concert By The Sea* is