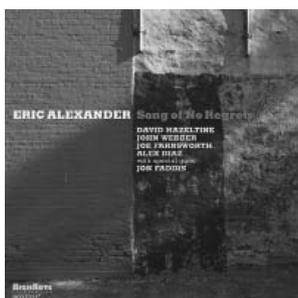


# Record Reviews



## ERIC ALEXANDER SONG OF NO REGRETS

(1) *But Here's The Thing*; (2) *These Three Words*; (3) *Grinder*; *Corazon Perdido*; *Mas Que Nada*; *Boom Zoom*; *Song Of No Regrets*; *Cede's Shack*; *Up, Up And Away* (55.03)

(1) Alexander (ts); Jon Faddis (t); David Hazeltine (p); John Webber (b); Joe Farnsworth (d); Alex Diaz (cga, bgo, pc). New Jersey, 12 June 2017.

(2) as (1) but Alexander (ts, org); Joshua Bruneau (f, cowbell); Esther Lomas-Sampedro, Lucas Alexander (pc).

(3) as (1) but omit Faddis.

**HighNote 731**

★★★

To say that Eric Alexander is a good, solid tenor saxophonist

should not be interpreted as anything but praise. He is not given to excess, although perfectly capable of stretching the boundaries if necessary, has a pleasing tone which carries suggestions of the classic exponents and clearly has no problem in mixing up his chosen material.

The band originals are joined by Stevie Wonder's *These Three Words*, the much-used *Mas Que Nada*, the Sergio Mendes opus *Song Of No Regrets* and the slightly less welcome pop song *Up, Up And Away*. Hence the programme is a varied proposition, treated to plenty of post hard bop devices, bluesy alternatives and subtle blendings during the more considered pieces. The supporting musicians are nicely tightly knit but know when to loosen up in consideration for the leader's needs.

There is nothing here to stir the blood but *Song Of No Regrets* is a damn good listen for saxophone enthusiasts and Alexander followers. In fact, it falls into the area where the majority of music we call jazz invariably fits.

Peter Gamble

## THE BASIE-ITES HOW HIGH THE MOON

(2) *How High The Moon*; (1) *A Fine Romance*; (2) *Poor Butterfly*; (1) *Nobody Else But Me*; (2) *When I Think About Lovin' You*; (1) *Isn't This A Lovely Day*; (2) *My Old Flame*; (1) *Makin' Whoopee*; *Can't Get Out Of This Mood*; (2) *September Song*; (1) *Old Buttermilk Sky*; *The More I See You*; (2) *Blue Moon*; (1) *I Never Has Seen Snow*; (2) *Stairway To The Stars*; (1) *Who Cares What People Say*; *The Charm Of You*; (2) *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*; (1) *My Kind Of Love*; *Mairzy Dotes* (64.31)

(1) Beverly Kenney (v); Joe Newman (t); Frank Wess (f, ts); Jimmy Jones (p); Freddie Green

(g); Eddie Jones (b); Jo Jones (d). NYC, 1956.

(2) Newman, Thad Jones (t); Al Grey (tb); Wess (f); Billy Mitchell, Frank Foster (ts); Barry Harris (p); Green (g); E. Jones (b); Sonny Payne (d). Detroit, 1959.

**Fresh Sound FSR-CD 947**

★★★★

Two mainstream small groups with the added benefit of one of the best jazz singers of the mid-1950s. The (1) tracks have the Basie rhythm section with Jimmy Jones in for the Count and their surging swing is a joy. Newman and Grey have several well-taken solos and they and Wess elsewhere ably support the singer. The slightly larger instrumental line-up on the (2) tracks, with Harris in for Jones, has the same flowing swing and many more solo spots for the frontliners.

The definition of a jazz singer then was much narrower than today yet Kenney delighted audiences and critics and especially fellow musicians. Only 24 when this set was recorded, despite her youth she displays a complete grasp of the form. Bill Reed writes extensively about her (chilledairtext.blogspot.co.uk/), quoting from a 1957 interview with Julie London who, citing Kenney among her favourite singers, declares: "I dig her because, well, she phrases like mad. She sings in tune, too; matter of fact, she sings like a musician."

The last of these qualities is Kenney's appeal as she allies this musicianship to a youthfully gleaming vocal sound that points her toward greatness. Sadly, it was not to be as she was showing signs of what today might be more readily identified as clinical depression. Four years after this recording she took a lethal combination of alcohol and Seconal. What she would have become had she gainted



maturity can only be speculated upon, but her death at 28 was clearly a great loss to jazz. The (2) tracks were originally released as *How High The Moon*; the (1) tracks as Beverly Kenney. Had this reissue included two Kenney albums the star rating would be a definite five. Derek Ansell did a profile on Kenney in JJ February 2013, following two Kenney issues on Fresh Sound in 2012.

Bruce Crowther

## DJANGO BATES' BELOVÈ THE STUDY OF TOUCH

*Sadness All The Way Down*; *Giorgiantics*; *Little Petherick*; *Senza Bitterness*; *We Are Not Lost*; *We Are Simply Finding Our Way*; *This World*; *The Study Of Touch*; *Passport*; *Slippage Street*; *Peonies As Promised*; *Happiness All The Way Up* (57.00)

Bates (p); Petter Eldh (b); Peter Bruun (d). Rainbow Studio, Oslo, June 2016.

**ECM 573 2663**

★★★★

Don't be fooled, beneath his court jester stage persona Django Bates is an extremely gifted composer-player. Debuting for ECM as far back as 1985 with *First House* and returning for a couple of outings with Sidsel Endresen in the 90s, the Loose Tubes co-founder has subsequently appeared on a host of international and domestic labels and grown comfortably

### JJ CONTENT

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into the role of jazz educator and mentor at Copenhagen's Rhythmic Music Academy (RMC). Returning to the label in 2017 on Anouar Brahem's stellar *Blue Maqams* with Dave Holland and Jack DeJohnette, the great English eccentric now steps out in perhaps the most unlikely of settings – a piano trio.

Despite a longstanding vow to avoid this ubiquitous format, legend has it that when Bates chanced upon a rehearsal by students Eldh and Bruun at the RMC in 2005 he performed an instant volte-face and the *Belovèd* trio was born. Best known for their radical re-imaginings of the music of Charlie Parker, other than an elliptical take on *Passport* this set focuses on new and familiar pieces by Bates. From the juxtaposed bookends of *Sadness All The Way Down* to the rather more short-lived *Happiness All The Way Up*, the material is collectively disassembled, viewed from a variety of perspectives and artfully re-built. Human Chain's *Little Petherick* becomes a classic Evans-esque ballad, the stunning title-track highlights the trio's remarkable chemistry in exquisite macro detail, while the more propulsive *Slippage Street* and humorously titled *We Are Not Lost* explore more expressionistic modes. Gripping from first to last, *Belovèd* are fast developing into one of today's best and most exploratory piano trios.

Fred Grand



**ANOUAR BRAHEM  
BLUE MAQAMS**

*Opening Day; La Nuit; Blue Maqams; Bahia; La Passante; Bom Dia Rio; Persepolis's Mirage; The Recovered Road To Al-Sham; Unexpected Outcome (76.59)*

Brahem (oud); Django Bates (p); Dave Holland (b); Jack DeJohnette (d). New York, May 2017

**ECM 576 7265**

★★★★

**CRITICS' CHOICE**

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

Django Bates' <i>Belovèd</i>	The Study Of Touch	ECM 573 2663
Booker Ervin	The Good Book The Early Years 1960-62	Acrobat 7121
Benny Goodman	Like A Bolt From The Blue	Halcyon 176
Woody Herman	The Woody Herman Collection 1937-56	Acrobat 3221
Pat Martino	Formidable	HighNote 7307
Oliver Nelson	The Complete Blues And The Abstract Truth	Phono 870283
Bobby Shew	Class Reunion	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 946
Martial Solal	Unreleased 1966 Los Angeles Sessions	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 943
Lucky Thompson Octet	In Paris 1960	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 948
Fats Waller And His Rhythm	Rhythm And Romance	Halcyon 177

*Maqam* is an Arabic word which means place, location, or position. Musically, it is the system of melodic modes used in traditional music, a technique of improvisation that defines the pitches, patterns and development of a piece. Brahem's blue take on maqam introduces elements of folk and jazz improvisation. There is a tentative feel in much of his music here, notably on the lengthy *La Nuit*, as if his ideas and themes are still waiting further development and have yet to be fully fleshed out. But that is their great strength, for the resultant ambiguity is beguiling.

For support, Brahem has called on a stellar band. He has recorded with Holland before, back on 1998's *Thimar*, and has always admired DeJohnette for his graceful rhythms. But it was ECM boss Manfred Eicher who suggested Django Bates for the piano stool and it was an inspired choice, for Bates fits perfectly in to Brahem's lilting sound world. Bates brings a free-flowing lyricism to his role, often floating high above Brahem's deeper, restrained oud lines, notably in the sublime *La Passante* and the grooving *Bom Dia Rio*. But occasionally he gloriously breaks free, as on the pulsating *Persepolis's Mirage*. Holland is, as ever, wonderfully tuneful, while DeJohnette is supple and subtle in his work. It's a marriage made in the stars.

Simon Adams

**MICHEL CAMILO  
LIVE IN LONDON**

*From Within; The Frim Fram Sauce; A Place In Time; Island Beat; Sandra's Serenade; Manteca; I Got Rhythm/Caravan/Sing Sing Sing (53.42)*

Camilo (p). London, 13 June 2015.

**Redondo Music 191924129394**

★★★★★

This is the first live solo piano release from the Grammy, Latin Grammy and Emmy award-winning pianist/composer (recorded at Queen Elizabeth Hall in 2015). It follows his excellent 2013 solo piano studio album entitled *What's Up?* I interviewed Michel a few years ago, just before his performance at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club (see [jazzjournal.co.uk/magazine/585](http://jazzjournal.co.uk/magazine/585) for my live review of that May 2013 gig), having written a two-part feature about him for JJ (see June 2013 issue), and I'd say that he's one of the very few pianists who successfully bridge the commonly perceived borders of jazz, classical, and Latin music.

To my mind, Camilo's best work brings aspects of these genres together in the context of his jazz playing and composing, whether in solo, small group or large ensemble. Here in live solo mode, he plays a set comprised mostly of his own compositions from the past three decades, alongside a few standards, and also Dizzy Gillespie's *Manteca* – it's no mean feat to perform the latter for solo piano, given that it's normally heard as a full-throttle Latin big band arrangement.

Three of the tracks from this new live release are also to be found on *What's Up?*, which makes for an interesting comparison as both albums have their own merits, but this new live album conveys more of the pianist's charisma than the studio equivalent, as he's an extremely dynamic performer – some would say even a showman. But it's all delivered with poise, under a veil of western classical reserve. Given this, an accompanying DVD live release would be even more appealing, but we'll have to wait a little longer for that.

Dave Jones



**BRIAN CHARETTE  
BACKUP**

*Tadd's Delight; Chelsea Bridge; A Shade Of Jade; Backup; The Blessing; Dance Of The Infidels; Spring Is Here; Dahoud; These Are Soulful Days; Riitha (66.23)*

Charette (B3 Hammond org); Henry Hey (p); Jochen Rueckert (d). December 2016.

**SteepleChase 31836**

★★★★

There seems to be something of a resurgence in organ-led trios. Or maybe they've never really been away. On *Kurrent*, his previous album which he issued himself, Charette experimented with electronics, but *Backup* is back in the mainstream, with a programme of jazz standards and just one small departure from organ-trio convention, the use of piano instead of guitar: 10 digits and 88 keys give more comping possibilities than a plectrum, pick, five digits and six strings, but Hey never muddies textures behind Charette and contributes elegant, absorbing and flowing solos himself.

Charette cites Tadd Dameron and Ornette Coleman as favourites. Dameron is represented by *Tadd's Delight* which kicks the album off to a satisfying start. Coleman's *The Blessing* gets a treatment that is interesting to compare with his own classic recording for his debut album *Something Else!* ... which