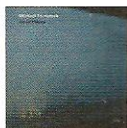


MICHAEL FORMANEK QUARTET

SMALL PLACES (ECM)



Michael Formanek's *The Rub and Spare Change* became one of 2010's critical sleeper hits, garnering massive praise. The real revelation was that the bassist's ease and strength as a leader wasn't already known on a wider level.

Formanek actually released albums under his own name in the '90s, but he's probably best known as a sideman in groups like Tim Berne's *Bloodcount*. Either way, he has returned with an effort that is a worthy follow-up to his last album.

Alto saxophonist Berne, pianist Craig Taborn and drummer Gerald Cleaver all return to the fold, and recorded this session following a tour that helped the music take root. Formanek's writing varies widely throughout the album. "Parting Ways" lasts 18 minutes, traversing various sections and finally ending when least expected. At five minutes, the title track builds on a rhythmic hook, which Taborn digs into in his solo, while "Soft Reality" closes the album with bowed bass leading the music.

On Berne's ECM album *Snakeoil* earlier this year, the bite of his horn was softened a bit by Manfred Eicher's production, giving it a more searching feeling. Eicher uses the same approach on *Small Places*, which adds to the nuances of the compositions. The effect does not soften the attack of the whole quartet, though. "Pong" might seem a little subdued, but Cleaver lets fly with some explosive fills beneath the soloists. The album's title aptly describes the makeup of Formanek's compositions, which have many small sections, offering something substantial to anyone ready to explore them. And even when the sound becomes spare and quiet, the suspense never flags. **MIKE SHANLEY**

TIA FULLER

ANGELIC WARRIOR (Mack Avenue)



Angelic Warrior is a veritable almanac of the alto saxophone in contemporary mainstream jazz. Tia Fuller gives her distinctive sound a full and exhilarating workout, with bop ("Cherokee"), Coltrane-esque modal jams ("Royston

Rumble"), Caribbean flavor ("Descend to Barbados"), sax-bass-drums trio ("So in Love") and even vocal accompaniment ("Body and Soul," featuring Dianne Reeves).

Fuller brings three secret weapons to the mix: a ferocious rhythm section (her sister and brother-in-law, pianist Shamie Royston and drummer Rudy Royston, bassist Mimi Jones and guest Terri Lyne Carrington); bassist John Patitucci, whose guitarlike electric piccolo bass here puts him on the frontline; and her own experience working in pop-pier realms with the likes of Beyoncé and Esperanza Spalding. The lattermost manifests clearly in the music's gloss and textures, as on "Ralphie's Groove" and "Tailor Made." It also tightens her compositions and arrangements. The melody-harmony integration in "Lil Les" is as solid as it gets, and without being tame: It's offset by Fuller and her sister trading 16s, progressively upping the rhythmic ante.

Fuller's sax chops, however, remain the cannon in the arsenal. She has remolded the post-Kenny Garrett alto lineage in her own unique image. Mellow enough to duet with Patitucci on three tunes and with Shamie Royston on two, she also demonstrates tremendous timbral muscle on "Lil Les."

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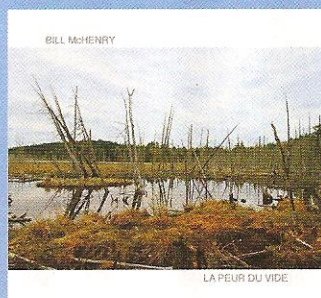


featuring: CLAUDIA ACUÑA, JOHNATHAN BLAKE, DANTON BOLLER, BILL CAMPBELL, TAYLOR EIGSTI, JOHN ELLIS, ALAN HAMPTON, GRETCHEN PARLATO, ADAM ROGERS, RYAN SCOTT, DAYNA STEPHENS, BECCA STEVENS, LERON THOMAS, CHRIS TORDINI, DOUG WAMBLE, SACHAL VASANDANI, AND BEN WILLIAMS.

News of unprecedented disaster that hit Japan last year has come and gone but the need for relief remains. I am sending this music into the world as an ambassador for people in Japan. I also hope that these songs will bring some comfort and light in your dark moments and help you reconnect with your own humanity.

Thank you for purchasing this album. All proceeds from the sales (CDs or digital playlists) will be forwarded to Habitat for Humanity, Japan. They are working hard to build homes for those who lost a great deal in the Earthquake/Tsunami/Nuclear disaster on 3.11.11. You can learn more about their activity and how you can help at www.habitatjp.org.

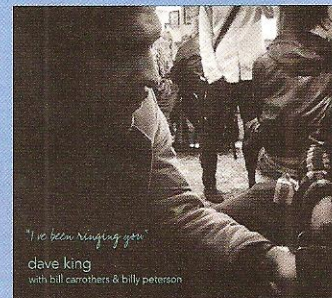
Everything for this album has been generously donated: music, engineering, studio time, artwork, manufacturing, distribution, and PR services. All the songs (except for track 5) were written just for this project and they are our gifts to you. I would like to thank all the artists who rose to the occasion: Claudia Acuña, Johnathan Blake, Danton Boller, Bill Campbell, Taylor Eigsti, John Ellis, Alan Hampton, Gretchen Parlato, Adam Rogers, Ryan Scott, Dayna Stephens, Becca Stevens, Leron Thomas, Chris Tordini, Doug Wamble, Sachal Vasandani, and Ben Williams. Thank you *Jazz Times* for donating this space.



BILL McHENRY LA PEUR DU VIDE SSC 1331 / IN STORES 10/30

McHenry has now recorded a new album live at the legendary Village Vanguard jazz club in New York City. *La Peur du Vide* (The Fear of Emptiness) showcases McHenry's prodigious talents alongside a tremendous ensemble featuring pianist Orrin Evans, bassist Eric Revis and drumming legend Andrew Cyrille.

Partially in an attempt to silence some critics, King has recorded an album of jazz standards performed by a trio of unquestionably superb jazz luminaries. *I've Been Ringing You* brings the talents of pianist **Bill Carrothers** and former Bill Evans bassist **Billy Peterson** together with King's expansive and expressive palette for a truly remarkable musical statement.



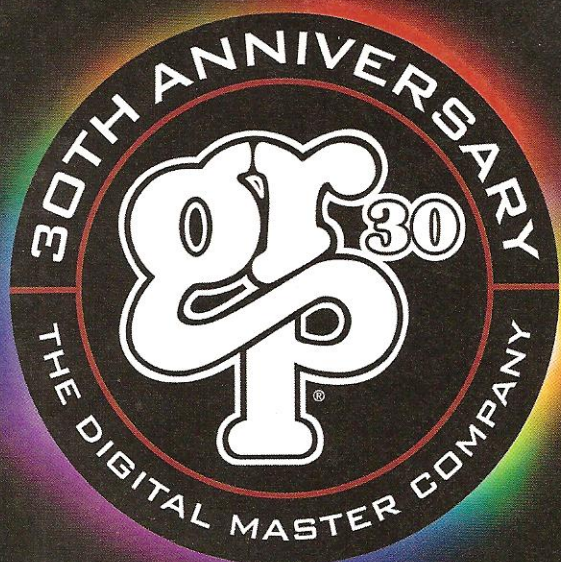
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And Fuller shows off her dizzying melodic imagination on "Simpl-City," and shrewdly navigates "Cherokee"'s changes at a breakneck funk tempo. It's quite a ride. **MICHAEL J. WEST**

GRANT GEISSMAN

BOP! BANG! BOOM! (Futurism)



L.A.-based guitarist Grant Geissman made his name with the "contemporary" jazz and commercial work that are so much a part of the Southern California scene. *Bop! Bang! Boom!* is advertised as his third CD in a trilogy that represents his "shift to more traditional jazz expressions." Yet like *Say That!* (2006) and *Cool Man Cool* (2009), those expressions are cloaked in hot-tub sheen.

The opening "Boom!" features a fine guitar solo—Geissman's claim to jazz fame is his 1978 solo on Chuck Mangione's early smooth-jazz hit "Feels So Good"—yet even the contributions of former Weather Report percussionist Alex Acuña can't overcome its pedestrian framework. "The Singularity" also seems like a composition based around a guitar solo, despite the efforts of Tierney Sutton's ace rhythm-section mates Kevin Axt (bass) and Ray Brinker (drums). A parade of guest stars includes saxophonist Tom Scott on the Latin-tinged Quincy Jones nod "Q Tip" and shuffling closer "Off the Grid," and Yellowjackets keyboardist Russell Ferrante playing electric piano on Geissman's classically influenced "Un Poco Español" and the 5/8-timed "Good Morning, Mr. Phelps."

Yet even the most anticipated guest number draws yawns. "Texas Shuffle" features the extraordinary pickers Albert Lee and Larry Carlton, whose guitar solos are nonetheless neutered by a rhythmic feel no more imaginative than the song's title. Geissman made enough money to start his own label and release such works by composing the themes to network TV shows like *Two and a Half Men*. Which makes it unsurprising that there isn't much bop in *Bop! Bang! Boom!* **BILL MEREDITH**

MARC JOHNSON/ELIANE ELIAS

SWEPT AWAY (ECM)



Eliane Elias occasionally needs to remind us that, back in the '80s when she was a member of Steps Ahead, before she ever laid down a vocal track, she had already established herself as a resourceful and dynamic pianist. On *Swept Away*, the vocal mic remains off and the Brazilian-born Elias—aligned with double bassist Marc Johnson (her husband and longtime collaborator), drummer Joey Baron (with whom both Elias and Johnson recorded a tribute to Bill Evans in 2007) and guest tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano—offers that reminder.

The trio tracks are especially riveting; Johnson and Baron erect a solid wall of support around Elias' frequent, heady expeditions, within which they shrewdly follow her lead and goad her, often simultaneously. For her part, Elias never strays into indulgence, alternating between unadorned blues-based runs and abruptly launched forays played at dazzling tempos. Lovano's tracks—he's on about half the album—alter the mood, as one would expect, but the overall level of compatibility remains intact.

The temperature changes often. "One Thousand and One Nights," one of the more aggressive trio tracks, as rhythmically dramatic as flamenco, practically rocks, Baron picking