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# JazzTimes

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by Bill Milkowski

**SCOTT TIXIER**

**BROOKLYN BAZAAR** (Sunnyside)

Scott Tixier, a 26-year-old French-born violinist who studied with Jean-Luc Ponty in Paris and Mark Feldman in his current base of Brooklyn, hits the ball out of the park on his debut. Joined by guitarist Douglas Bradford (whose slightly distorted sound gives this session an edge), pianist Jesse Elder, bassist Massimo Biolcati and drummer Arthur Vint, Tixier impresses with both his stellar chops and fresh conceptual vision on tracks like "Keep in Touch," the joyous "Bushwick Party" (which morphs from 12/8 romp to 4/4 groove and has Elder cleverly comping a James Brown riff), the moving ballad "Arawaks" (featuring Emilie Weibel's wordless soprano vocals), the frantic swinger "Miss Katsu" and the adventurous "Shopping With Mark F" (for Feldman).

**DAVID BERKMAN**

**SELF-PORTRAIT** (RPR)

David Berkman, an inventive pianist and accomplished composer and bandleader, is in a reflective, romantic mood on this solo outing. He turns in lovely, faithful renditions of Jerome Kern's "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," George Gershwin's "Embraceable You" and Jimmy Van Heusen's "It Could Happen to You," then takes great liberties on highly impressionistic, barely recognizable versions of "Body and Soul," Gershwin's "But Not for Me" and Jule Styne's "Just in Time." The lone swinger here is "Milestones"—the 1947 John Lewis tune that appeared on Miles' first album as a leader, not Miles' 1958 modal masterpiece of the same name. Berkman also includes the affecting original "Tiny Prairie Landscape" and four improvised sketches on this crystalline document.

**BRIAN CHARETTE**

**MUSIC FOR ORGAN SEXTETTE** (SteepleChase)

Determined not to follow the same ol' bop, blues and ballads formula of most organ-group sessions, Hammond player Brian Charette takes a different route on this renegade sextet outing. Working with four distinct voices—Jay Collins' flute, John Ellis' bass clarinet, Joel Frahm's tenor and Mike DiRubbio's alto—Charette takes this session to places that Jimmy Smith and Jack McDuff never dreamed of. There's the Bach-inspired

"Fugue for Kathleen Anne/Ex-Girlfriend Variations"; the oddly expressive reggae number "The Elvira Pacifer," which has Collins quoting from Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" in his flute solo; and the shape-shifting "Risk," which perfectly describes Charette's m.o. throughout this wildly imaginative project. Other original takes on organ-group fare include the odd-metered stop-time vehicle "Computer God," the Olivier Messiaen-inspired "French Birds" and Charette's brush with the avant-garde on "Mode for Sean Wayland." There's still plenty of boppish burn and blues here—"Equal Opportunity," the shuffle-swing section of "Risk" and the gospel-tinged "Prayer for an Agnostic"—but no bossa.

**DANIEL FREEDMAN**

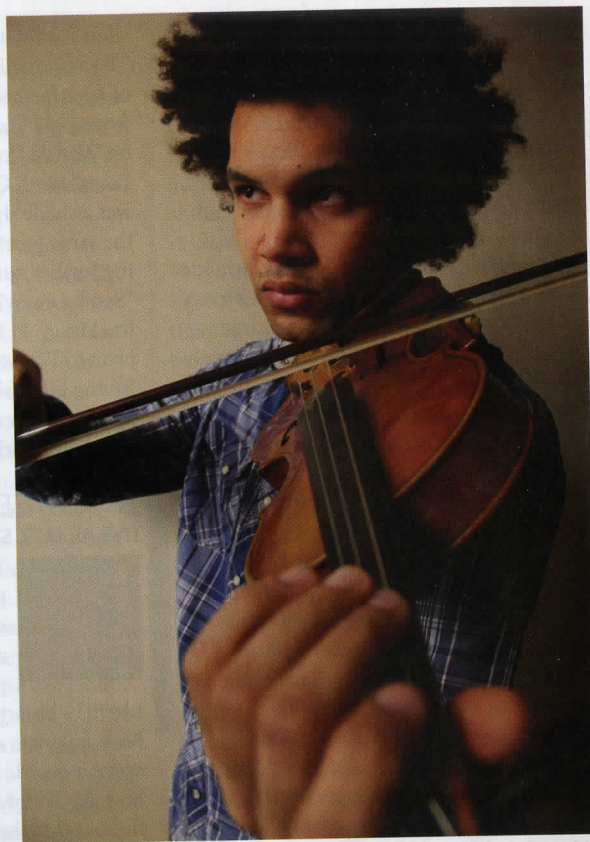
**BAMAKO BY BUS** (Anzic)

Drummer Daniel Freedman, a New York native and member of the band Third World Love, steps out with his second album as a leader, blending jazz with Yoruban prayer chants, Moroccan music, Brazilian and Afro-Cuban rhythms, funk and pop. With Freedman on traps, the core group is rounded out by bassist Meshell Ndegeocello, keyboardist Jason Lindner and trumpeter Avishai Cohen. Special guests on this musical travelogue include *bata* master and vocalist Abraham Rodriguez, who plays on two folkloric numbers, "Odudua" and the clave-fueled "Rumba Pa' NYC," and the great Benin-born guitarist Lionel Loueke, who appears on the polyrhythmic jam "Elegba Wa" and three other African-flavored numbers. Tenor saxophonist Mark Turner also appears alongside trumpeter Cohen on the soothing ballad "Alona" and the grooving 7/8 number "Saaba."

**SEBASTIAN GILLE**

**ANTHEM** (Pirouet)

The German quartet led by saxophonist-composer Sebastian Gille strikes an interactive, conversational



▲ Bowing Brooklyn-Style: Scott Tixier

accord on this stirring, ECM-ish release. A forceful and daring player—you can hear touches of Michael Brecker and the icy cry of Jan Garbarek in his tenor playing—Gille covers the full range of his horn in passionate terms on the opener, "Blossom," and on the introspective title track. Pianist Pablo Held dives headlong into Keith Jarrett territory on the tender and probing "Embrace," which has Gille switching to soprano, and on the rubato "Charisma." Gille and company deliver possibly the most mournful interpretation of Kurt Weill's "Barbara Song" ever, in addition to turning in an absolutely sublime version of the standard ballad "You Won't Forget Me." Bassist Robert Landfermann and ultra-sensitive drummer Jonas Burgwinkel are both key to the telepathic four-way conversation that takes place throughout this superb debut.

**GLOBAL NOIZE**

**A PRAYER FOR THE PLANET** (Lightyear)

Synth wiz Jason Miles helped usher Miles Davis into contemporary jazz during the '80s with his cutting-edge synth programming on *Tutu*, *Music From Siesta* and *Amandla*. In 2008, he

formed Global Noize with turntablist DJ Logic and enlisted a host of special guests on the project's self-titled debut. The two are back, combining funk and world-groove on this successful crossover outing. Mumbai-born singer Falu has also returned, contributing Indian-classical vocals on one of the album's most successful tracks, the hard-hitting "Charismalove," which features Oz Noy on guitar and Andy Snitzer on soprano sax. Former War harmonica ace Lee Oskar floats freely behind Moroccan singer Malika Zarrá's exotic vocals on "Viva Le Femme." Jeff Coffin creates an over-dubbed horn section on the groove-heavy "Rios (A Riot in Outer Space)," and Brazilian guitar master Romero Lubambo crafts a mellow backdrop on "Naturza E Paz (Nature and Peace)."

**STEVE HOROWITZ**

**NEW MONSTERS** (Posi-Tone)

This singular ensemble from San Francisco is led by bassist Steve Horowitz and features the writing of tenor saxophonist Dan Plonsey. The myriad influences heard on this wildly eclectic outing range from tango to Zappa to postbop and free jazz, with touches of klezmer and minimalism thrown into the mix. Those elements come together most effectively on "Mirror Earth" and the urgent title track, the latter of which has Horowitz walking on electric bass and Plonsey taking it all the way out during his unaccompanied tenor solo. "Shattered Silence" features some outstanding piano work from Scott Looney, who evokes Cecil Taylor on the short "Brains for Breakfast." There's also a clever mash-up of John Coltrane's "India" with Eric Dolphy's "Red Planet" (or, as many critics and historians would argue, Trane's "Miles Mode"). Quirky and spirited, *New Monsters* grows on you.

**THE LANDRUS KALEIDOSCOPE**

**CAPSULE** (BlueLand)

Baritone sax and bass clarinet ace Brian Landrus takes a refreshing, modernist approach to the jazz quintet on his sixth album as a leader. Accompanied by up-and-coming guitarist Nir Felder and the sensational drummer Rudy Royston, along with bassist Matthew Parish and veteran keyboardist Michael Cain, Landrus blows with rare precision and authority on two drum-and-bass-flavored numbers, "Striped Phase" and "Beauty," then settles into a relaxed,

reggae-ish vibe on "Like the Wind," which features some outstanding guitar work by Felder. Landrus bears down on his bari on the surging title track, then luxuriates on the sparse ballad "Now," where Cain plays with Zen-like restraint during his piano solo. Felder and Landrus share tight unison and harmony lines on "Wide Sky," and on the turbulent dirge "71 & On the Road," Felder dials up a touch of distortion as Landrus wails intensely on his bari. Landrus is someone to watch, an exciting voice on the big horn.

**JAMES MULLER**

**KABOOM** (Seed)

Australian guitarist James Muller makes a potent statement on his fourth release as a leader, originally issued in 2006 and recently re-pressed. Recorded in New York with drummer Bill Stewart and bassist Matt Penman, *Kaboom* showcases Muller's startling six-string facility and fresh compositional style. Highlights include the swinging title track; the edgy "D Blues," full of daring intervallic leaps and rapid-fire single-note streams; and Muller's soulful and swinging tribute tune "Chick Corea," on which he burns up the fretboard yet again. Muller closes with a straight reading of "All the Things You Are" that has him blowing over the bar line with jaw-dropping abandon. For sheer speed, spotless articulation and fertile ideas, Muller ranks right up there with fellow Aussie chopsmeister Frank Gambale.

**RANDY NAPOLEON**

**THE JUKEBOX CROWD** (Gut String)

A current member of Freddy Cole's quartet and former sideman to Michael Bublé, the accomplished guitarist-composer-arranger Randy Napoleon demonstrates clear, concise fingerstyle technique on this winning collection of standards and originals. From his bluesy "Everybody Has Soul" to inventive remakes of Brian Wilson's "God Only Knows," "I'm in the Mood for Love" (done as a crackling uptempo burner) and "Fools Rush In" (here a bossa nova), Napoleon delivers a warm, clean tone on his Stadler hollowbody guitar with deliberate, languid phrasing that is understated yet eminently swinging. His horn arrangements for trumpeter Justin Walter, tenor saxophonist Ben Jansson and trombonist Josh Brown add spice to this

easygoing session, which is fueled by Hammond B3 organist Duncan W. McMillan and drummer Quincy Davis. But Napoleon closes the album out solo, with his fingerstyle gem "Our First Dance."

**AMANDA RUZZA**

**THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED** (Pimenta)

Born in São Paulo, Brazil, to a Chilean mother and Italian father, Amanda Ruzza gravitated to the electric bass at an early age and was gigging professionally by age 13. Now based in New York, she makes a considerable impression with this leader debut. Ruzza explores hard-driving funk ("Larry and I") as well as authentic Brazilian numbers ("Pagão" by *choro* master Pixinguinha), sometimes arriving at an organic meld of the two on the same track ("Costanera"). As a player, she excels at Larry Graham-style slap technique on the tribute piece "Larry and I," and reveals a decided Jaco Pastorius influence on the extended bass intro to her hauntingly beautiful ballad "Monday, 3 A.M." She is also deeply tied to the tradition of the Afro-Cuban *tumbao*, as showcased on her grooving "Pimenta No Chôro." Ruzza is aided immensely throughout by her coproducer, the superb Brazilian drummer Mauricio Zottarelli (who is turned loose on "Costanera" and "Gin"). And she benefits from strong solo contributions from saxophonists David Binney and Lucas Pino, trombonist Chris Stover and Mamiko Watanabe on Fender Rhodes.

**ANDREA VENEZIANI TRIO**

**OLTREOCEANO** (andreaveneziani.com)

The adventurous Tuscan-born bassist Andrea Veneziani has found the perfect piano partner in Kenny Werner, whose sensitive, exploratory tack fits well with the leader's ideas on delicate, searching vehicles like "Night Flight," "Mark Rothko" and "In Viaggio Con Te." (All of those cuts are clearly inspired by the seamless interplay of the classic Bill Evans Trio with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian.) Along with the remarkably sensitive and melodic drummer Ross Pederson, Veneziani and Werner delve into the free zone on three improvised interludes, and pay tribute to three jazz icons on faithful versions of Evans' "Time Remembered," Charlie Parker's "Segment" and Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica." Veneziani's swing factor is strong, his playing on the intimate numbers is responsive and conversational,