

## **Bopndick's 10 picks February 2007**

By Dick Crockett "The Voice" 88.7fm

### **BILLY STRAYHORN: LUSH LIFE** Blue Note

A tribute to one of jazz great composers who for almost 30 years collaborated with Duke Ellington and in fact embellished that Ellington signature sound, along with composing some of Ellington's classic as "Take The A Train" and "Satin Doll," along with some of his own most cherished melodies as "Lush Life," "Something To Live For," "Daydream." In fact, one could write a whole scenario on "Lush Life," the nuevo riche melancholy of high living. It's prevalent Strayhorn's music. His voice is clear and distinctive, his lyricism and sense of composition within the jazz context rates among the jazz greats. This CD features some of today's great musicians to interpret his music, Dianne Reeves, Russell Malone, Hank Jones, Bill Charlap, Elvis Costello, Joe Lovano.

This Cd reflects a depth of reflective metaphor as in "The Flowers Die Of Love," the light, heady waltz in "Lotus Blossom," with Hank Jones almost stride like expertise and Joe Lovano's lyric and blaise' trevails. There are recently discovered songs included here, as "So This Is Love," "Valse" and "Fantastic Rhythm" perform by pianist Bill Charlap making this a most recent and you'll soon discover a most sought of collection from this g4reat artist. And be sure to see the Feb 6, 2007, PBS edition of Independent Lens, the film by Robert Levi, "The Untold story Of Billy Strayhorn."

### **CHARLES TOLLIVER BIG BAND WITH LOVE** Blue Note

Charles Tolliver resides from afar back in the sixties as Jackie Mclean's trumpet player on the Blue Note sessions. Here, he projects his own conception with a big band on this new CD. The arrangements are progressive sidling up to avant gard, as original as a young George Russell and soulful as a Joe Henderson. Charles Tolliver has incorporated many techniques used in small bands, long solos, unincumbered brass and reed phrasing with off kilter percussion.. Tolliver projects a near perfect solo on Monk's "Round Midnight." It's a hard bop big band, with very modern arrangements, intoxicating and aggressive as a post modern big band can get...

### **HENDRIK MEURKENS/ NEW YORK SAMBA JAZZ QUINTET** Zoho Records

Hendrik Meurkin's a prolific jazz harmonica player who will occasionally show his versatility on vibraphone as he most apply proclaims on his new CD. Joao Donato's "A Ra" is most affable and downright energetic and groovy as Meurkens and his NY Samba Jazz Quintet get it done. NYSJQ features pianist, Helio Alves, saxophonist Jed Levy, Gustavo Amarante, bass and Adriano Santos on drums and as you listen, the more you appreciate the musicianship. Hendrik Meurkens and his harmonica have been used on many recordings. This is his first as a leader. There's an interesting European atmosphere in this CD although it's recorded live in New Jersey with a notable Brazilian jazz flavor. Meurkens like Thielemans is a master of the jazz romantic interlude. This is the kind of recording you wish you were there for it's memory and warmth. Since it's here and now, you can relive over and over.

**JIM McNEELY/KELLY SILL/JOEL SPENCER BONEYARD** Origin Records

Classic locked in hard bop,. That's what this Cd is about. There's swagger here that has a cadence that dates back to the sixties. There's a tinge of the elegance in bop meandering and eau blues in this presentation. Jim McNeely, pianist has it right in the corner pocket with other piano greats from Chicago, for hard bop was bred in the hard corners of the northeast and mid west just as the 20th Century was turning fifty, as McNeely and friends are most aware. That's what this cd implies...It's what bop noir is about, the black and white pilfering smokestacks of that era that generated such greats as Hank Garland, Wynton Kelly, Bill Evans, Tommie Flanigan, Junior Mance, Bobby Timmons, young Herbie Hancock barely out of Chicago and the legendary Oscar Peterson. Jim McNeely brings it back in a straight, laid back reharmonization, a hard bop signature if there ever was one, or two, or four, especially one Wayne Shorter's great "Fe Fi Fo Fum."

You know what effusive is...an adjective attached to a greater moment or thing.

Effusion is more greater an object here, essentially a hard bop expression. Something that's effused. An unrestrained expression of feelings....

Ain't that what this is all about with this new Jim McNeely CD.

**TED'S WARREN COMMISSION FIRST TIME CALLER** CBC Radio

Drummer Ted Warren creates an interesting hard bop landscape with his quartet. There's some memorable hard bop hooks with "The Vibe" with guitarist Ted Quinlan fingering with his strings loose in a reharmonizing metaphoria. Trumpet player Mike Malone is funky and gregarious in his phrasing.

You get the picture as you realize how Ted Warren has it all locked in, everyone's on their game with the projected whole enchalada. "The Trail" finds Quinlan in interesting guitar territory, almost Bill Frisell in his approach.

For me the key to this cd is the tune, "What Tony Said(For Tony Williams.) It's got the stretch, the funk and dynamics that a good jazz piece with nice long solos from Malone on trumpet and an especially warm Quinlan on guitar and a steady full Mike Downes on bass. Ted Warren's band is loose, with articulate phrasing with open spaces and a great hooks as this tribute to Tony Williams says in the best possible mode. The

Ted Warren has the ability to write and orchestrate, for the musicians to stretch a little with more space in varying robust rhythmic tempos . This new cd gives that opportunity to explore inner virtues in a sphere of trust and admiration.

**JEFF ANTONIUK and the JAZZ UPDATE HERE TODAY**

Jeff Antoniuk's music has a straight forward definitive character. Early Jazz Crusader's exhibited a similar enthusiasm. The interplay between saxophonist Jeff Antoniuk and trumpet player Dave Ballou on "Noah's Little Play Song" is playful, humorous and poignant. Antoniuk's hard driving sound carries into Monk's "Four In One," expressive as a Booker Ervin. "Hear Today" indicates Antoniuk's expressive intent on soprano saxophone melodic lyricism, a free open solo, a tribute to the memory of his grandmother. "Blues For J.D.Salinger." is an interesting view with young artists sitting in, reading old writings of youthful counter play and moving forward avant-gard. "Man's Best Friend" is in the style of Lou Donaldson and Ray Barretto. Then a run on Benny Golson's "Stablemates" and a rendition of Ellington's "Prelude To A Kiss" and Jeff Antoniuk is articulate and expressive on his instrument. Jeff Antoniuk is a new original jazz musician, as Gato Barbieri can swing and Jan Garbarek knows the difference.

**MATT WILSON'S ARTS & CRAFTS THE SCENIC ROUTE** Palmetto Records

Post partum modern. No it's not depression. Jack Webb and his friend Shorty jerking out west with Sonny to meet the Jetsons in a far fifties deutero-gamy, for second marriages with shot gun weddings do work and justify numerous beginnings and multiple endings. Matt Wilson has let free reining conception move back and forward. It may sound as modern technology has usurped past movie trailers until "Feeling The Sway" with a whole 'another thing going on here' as if brother Les joined in for some gospel chitlin. Terrell Stafford just blows his brains out and down with some testify and justify...in. Wild and Crazy as it sounds, Ornette Coleman's "Rejoicing" is a voice making the rounds on a Saturday night on 52 nd Street or in Goose Bay, as an opening number in Juneau Alaska where Wilson dedicated this to the corporations who make Global warming possible....Yes, yes, it's all about jazz and W. C. Fields for this band will be a hit even way outback, a funk, a spunk and run a Monk!

**DAVID SANFORD & THE PITTSBURGH COLLECTIVE LIVE AT THE KNITTING FACTORY** Oxingale Records

Composure and conductor David Sanford leads the Pittsburgh Collective in a multi faceted display of remarkable fireworks of original modern jazz composition. With a band comprised of five trumpets, five saxophones and five trombones.

With an array this size, Sanford reaches a territory occupied by few prestigious jazz contributors, George Russell, Gunther Schuller and Bob Graettinger in his brief career. This music is extraordinary in it's conception with numerous modern variations that may precede what we conceive as jazz. We remember the modern music and it's importance to jazz definition in the fifties. There's relevance today, not only as a Sunday concert at the Guggenheim , and a lead band at the Bach Festival on the Central California coast.

If I were ever have to have therapy I'd want my therapist to appreciate this, as well as Otis Redding. This music is the elixir of the gods, even to inspire the reconstruction of Stonehenge. The Pagan, Primordial and the anal fastidious need not apply. It may be just the cure, an afternoon in the Park with this music emanating from a natural amphitheater.

**FRANK LoCRAS TO WHEN YOU'RE THERE** MAXJAZZ

Frank LoCraSto possesses a rare compositional sense throughou this new Cd, extending beyond the piano to other peripherals, the saxophone, guitar, bass and percussion. Guitarist Mike Moreno is an exceptional collaborator on both acoustic and electric. LoCraSto possesses a youthful energy with writing that extends beyond this format into other more farf reaching vistas. That's what this young composer has to offer, a crest to another moon, especially if it's in full view, blushing and ebullient, bright, thoughtful ideas evident in this new CD with a poignant Becca Stevens vocal on "Gathered Impression." The pastorals of "Going Home" with Chris Cheek heroic leanings on saxophone, guitarist Mike Moreno's prominent views throughout with some inventive slide lyricism as well as other orchestrations, for a Chopin into bossa, scherzos and free waltz, this is a remarkable new first showing for this young artist with Capistrano runs, invariable birds in flight.

**JOHN TAYLOR/MARTIN FRANCE/PALLE DANIELSSON ANDEL OF THE PRESENCE** CamJazz

John Taylor, born in Manchester and a very fine jazz pianist, one of England's all time best modern jazz musicians. I say this with all due respect and love for his music. The songs here are different excursions of cool nights and heady days. This CD features double bassist, Palle Danielsson and drummer Martin France in one of Taylor's best. There's a trust and confidence within this trio you feel as a listener, for John Taylor lets them go far afield, right off in "Up Too Late" to a ballad longing for words, a nome of a Dry Stone." One may miss this olfactory of ideas with this trio, lyrical, melodic and consecrated scores of idealism skirting through devilish changes "In Cologne" permeating from John Taylor's conception. This Cd will take you on different exploratory evolving trips, opening bars of Danielsson to "Vaguely Asian" as you and friends will travel abroad different transports to reach the many similar places you can walk to, all along. The more romantic and complicated the dancer, the more your friend for life.

Till next time—Dick Crockett