

ALBUM REVIEWS//

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NEW RELEASES//A-Z



Eivind Austad Trio

Idris Ackamoor & The Pyramids

We Be All Africans

Strut ★★★

Idris Ackamoor (as), with rhythm section and vocals. Rec. 2015

Those with an ear for the independent sector in jazz will recognise The Pyramids as one of the legendary exponents of Egypt-inspired music that took an obvious cue from Sun Ra. The band issued several much sought-after albums in the 1970s (above all the outstanding *King Of Kings*) and their somewhat unforeseen reemergence under the official leadership of founder and alto saxophonist Idris Ackamoor is an exciting *coup de theatre*, all the more so because, to cut to the chase, the band still has it. The sense of ancestral ceremony in the music, from the highly atmospheric fanfares to the rhapsodic chants and rousing lyrics, that was the central building block some four decades ago, is well intact. But there has been a subtle updating of the sound. A more explicit resonance of African music, from highlife percussion to horn lines *à la* Ethiopiques, can be heard on some tracks while more abstract modalism, making no secret of a debt to Coltrane as well as Ra, defines others. While this work is not breaking radical new ground in terms of jazz of a decidedly Afrocentric character, it is very well executed, mostly bearing the hallmarks rather than the clichés of the genre. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Eivind Austad Trio

Moving

Ozella OZ061CD ★★★★★

Recommended

Eivind Austad (p), Magne Thormodsæter (b) and Håkon Mjåset Johansen (d). Rec. December 2013

The German Ozella label is establishing a reputation for itself with a roster of talent that includes some classy piano trios. Eivind Austad's trio is no exception, maybe one of the best on a label that sets store by such things. The band has tended to keep itself to itself on the Bergen jazz scene, not venturing too far afield from its home base, and during its 15-year existence has developed a distinct voice largely beyond the scope of national and international scrutiny. All his mistakes and wrong turnings that mark the inevitable path of a true artist have been done in relative privacy, and his style, both mature and fully-formed, is revealed here. After this album the good burghers of Bergen are going to have to share this band with the rest of Europe – it really does deserve to be heard on the European festival circuit. The publicity notes that accompany this release claim it's 'trio jazz for the inner blue note', which nails things nicely. Like many Norwegian jazz musicians, Austad is also familiar with both the classical and Norwegian folk traditions, the latter held in high regard within the country's musical education system. But while he clearly comes from the 'Norwegian School', he is quite happy to let his American

influences shine through – from Bill Evans, Jarrett, Corea through R&B to gospel. Now if all this sounds like a bit of an indigestible mix you'd be reckoning without Austad's shrewd aesthetic vision that pulls all these diverse strands into a very personal style – tracks like 'Homeland', 'Moving' and 'All of You' have the poise, elegance and originality of the very best piano trios in jazz today. **Stuart Nicholson**

Peter Bernstein

Let Loose

Smoke Sessions SSR-1604 ★★★

Peter Bernstein (el g), Gerald Clayton (p), Doug Weiss (b) and Bill Stewart (d). Rec. 3 January 2016

Despite being issued under the imprint of the Manhattan jazz club, Smoke, where Bernstein is regularly heard, this is a studio session, recorded eight months after this quartet had played a week at another Manhattan club, The Village Vanguard. It's a band of old colleagues, with the exception of the younger pianist, and the mutual understanding between them is clear from the offset, all four sounding like they are in that comfort zone where they can be themselves, whether stretching out or accommodating the forays of others. There are five Bernstein tunes, ranging from the loose-limbed opening title track and the chirpy, Hefti-ish 'Cupcake' to the semi-samba ballad 'Resplendor' and the dreamy 'Lullaby For B'. The Cuban favourite 'Tres Palabras' and Woody Shaw's evergreen 'Sweet Love Of Mine' are among the non-originals. While Bernstein understandably takes the lion's share of the solo space and delivers the goods every time, there are some especially tasty excursions from Clayton – including a peach of a solo on 'Blue Gardenia' where he works in a brief Ellington quote. A fine example of jazz which doesn't have anything to prove – it is just happy to be. **Peter Bacon**

Mihaly Borbély Quartet

Be By Me Tonight/Gyere Hozzam Estere

BMC CD231 ★★★

Mihaly Borbély (as, ss, cl, b cl, Hungarian reeds), Aron Talas (p), Balazs Horvath (b) and Istvan Baló (d). Rec. 2015

Budapest's BMC – concert hall, recording studio, jazz club, label and all-round creative hub – has provided an invaluable platform for the Hungarian jazz scene and this latest release is a high quality addition to its growing catalogue. While the expected *signes particuliers* of music from this still relatively unrecognised territory are present and correct – namely themes with a strong edge of a rich folk tradition, this quartet has a character all of its own, the propulsive percussive character and subtle shadings of drummer Istvan Baló standing out in a original compositions. Like this small group offerings the music both momentum and considered attention to detail, and the movement between ballads and up-tempo dance numbers serves to underline the ensemble cohesion. Borbély's alto part punch but his arsenal of Hungarian reeds – tilinko, supelka and more well-known tarogato

Rich Brown

