



No Subject

East Axis (Brother Mister Productions-Mack Avenue)
by Andrew Hamlin

East Axis' debut, *Cool With That*, featured saxophonist Allen Lowe as the fourth member of a unit that stretched out—on one occasion—to almost half an hour. The pieces found here, the group's sophomore effort, however, run much shorter, yielding their flavor quickly and tartly. On *No Subject*, the fourth member is instead reedman Scott Robinson (tenor saxophone, alto clarinet, tarogato, trumpet, slide cornet), who had never previously played with any of the other three core East Axis members—Matthew Shipp (piano), Kevin Ray (bass) and Gerald Cleaver (drums)—before this two-day recording session.

The resulting jazz conversation sounds at first politer and less audacious than one might expect from such a frequently free-improvising bunch. Opener "At the Very Least" finds Shipp off in one corner, laying down figures for a shifting dance and Robinson calling to him with mystical intonations on tarogato (a clarinet-like Hungarian instrument whose sound more resembles a soprano sax). Soon enough, the interchange heats up, though "I Like It Very Much" finds the quartet in a more conventional groove. That said, for this foursome such conventions allow any one of the musicians to push or lay back on the beat, lay out or drop back in. Shipp chords eloquently behind Robinson (heard here on tenor) who, after a few minutes, slips from actual notes to a rough cicada buzz, cueing a Shipp solo. Robinson lays out entirely on the appropriately-titled "See What You Think"; Ray and Cleaver take turns double-timing across an undulating surface of which Shipp is the anchor underneath. "Metal Sounds", one of the longer outings, was named by the bassist, who remarked of the plodding "Dazed and Confused"-like Led Zeppelin rhythm, "This must be our Sabbath, Zeppelin, Blue Oyster Cult groove."

For more info visit mackavenue.com. East Axis' album release concert is at Joe's Pub Jul. 8. See Calendar.



Preludes

Jeb Patton (Cellar Music)

Let Go

Sam Taylor (Cellar Music)

by Scott Yanow

Pianist Jeb Patton first gained fame when he joined the Heath Brothers in 1996, the only member of the quartet not a member of the Heath family. He has since recorded with such notables as Lewis Nash, Winard Harper, the Anderson Brothers, Roberta Gambarini, Dmitry Baevsky and Charles McPherson, plus led several sessions of his own.

The reliable hard bop-oriented pianist has a background in classical music. During the COVID period, he filled in some of his unexpected free time by practicing classical pieces, which gave him an opportunity to work on his playing and iron out some

technical issues. In addition, Patton composed a series of "preludes" that utilize classical-type melodies and chord changes suitable for jazz players.

Preludes consists of eight originals in different keys. For this project, recorded in late 2021, Patton is joined by John Ellis (tenor, soprano, flute, bass clarinet), Mike Rodriguez (trumpet), David Wong (bass) and Quincy Davis (drums). In most cases, the pianist's themes, while original, sound as if they could have been excerpts from major classical works before becoming viable platforms for improvisation. Among the more memorable pieces are the driving "Prelude in C minor" which has a fast melody that sounds like early '50s hard bop; the dreamy ballad "Prelude in B minor"; the speedy single-note piano playing of "Prelude in E minor", inspired by both Bud Powell and Bach; and the slow and thoughtful "Prelude in E Major". Along the way there are many rewarding solos from Patton, Ellis and Rodriguez, with versatile supportive playing from Wong and Davis (the latter who gets drum breaks on some of the pieces). Concluding *Preludes* is Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss", a feature for the trio taken at a medium tempo.

Patton is a sideman on tenor saxophonist Sam Taylor's *Let Go*, a more conventional but quite rewarding quintet date. Taylor, a native of Philadelphia who has been part of the New York jazz scene since 2005, had led two previous albums for Cellar Music (*My Future Just Passed* and *Along the Way*). For *Let Go*, he heads a boppish quintet that also includes Terell Stafford (trumpet), Neal Miner (bass) and Willie Jones III (drums). From the start of the opening cut, Barry Harris' "Luminescence", which utilizes the chord changes of "How High the Moon" and "Ornithology", it is obvious that this will be a set of often-heated straight-ahead bop. While there are a few standards (including "Here's That Rainy Day" and "Bye Bye Baby"), Taylor mostly emphasizes superior obscurities, including a cooking "You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile", Hank Jones' moody ballad "Angel Face" and Babs Gonzales' "Gettin' Together".

Taylor has a large tone and a style that fits very well into '50s jazz settings, sometimes hinting a bit at vintage Sonny Rollins. Just as Scott Hamilton's emergence in the '70s was a major factor in the comeback of small group swing, Taylor's gradual rise to prominence is a good sign for the future of straight-ahead jazz. Like Hamilton, he does not copy the past and instead has developed his creative voice within the older style. With Stafford and Patton very much in top form and Miner and Jones contributing stimulating support, *Let Go* is an album that anyone who enjoys swinging jazz will want to acquire.

For more info visit cellarlive.com. Patton is at Dizzy's Club Jul. 20-23 with Charles McPherson. See Calendar.



Aire

Magos Herrera (Sunnyside)

by Elliott Simon

Vocalist and composer Magos Herrera's *Aire* is a captivating fusion of classic Latin American songs and original compositions, enriched by skillful orchestrations. Herrera showcases her versatility by singing in Spanish, English and Portuguese, infusing each song with her unique touch. Her leadership and voice unite the rich brass, woodwind and string sections, resulting in a harmonious and balanced sound. Her tender collaboration with Brazilian guitarist Vinicius Gomes on Guinga's "Passarinhadeira" is a soothing

break from otherwise grand yet cohesive material. In addition to Gomes, the core ensemble includes Sam Minaie (bass), Alex Kautz (drums) and Gonzalo Grau (percussion).

The arrangements by Argentinian pianist Diego Schissi are especially noteworthy. He gives Violetta Parra's "Gracias a la Vida" a modern treatment, starting with a traditional vocal/guitar duet and elegantly transitioning into an orchestral setting, breathing life into Herrera's vocals and Ingrid Jensen's expressive trumpet. Similarly, Schissi creates an achingly beautiful setting for the elegy "Alfonsina y el Mar", made famous by vocalist Mercedes Sosa and written by Argentinians Ariel Ramirez and Félix Luna. Pianist Blair McMillen weaves in and out of the strings and percussion, supporting Herrera's plaintive vocals. Jensen also appears on Herrera's self-penned "Remanso", adding textural detail to this contemplative composition, while Brazilian vocalist Dori Caymmi joins Herrera for a nostalgic rendition of guitarist Baden Powell's breezy "Samba em Prelúdio".

Schissi also arranged the deceptively simple "Choro de Lua," written for Herrera's niece. The music soars skyward with wordless vocals and Alex Sopp's ethereal flute, while "Papalote", written for her nephew, is piloted to great heights by Gomes' excellent fretwork and Herrera's delicate vocals. Grau's arrangements of three of Herrera's compositions are also impressive: the catchy title track, the mesmerizing and superbly constructed ballad "The Calling", and closer "The Healer", which pays homage to Herrera's Mexican musical heritage and to shaman Maria Sabina. *Aire* exquisitely blends the old and the new like nothing else in the Latin jazz genre.

For more info visit sunnysiderecords.com. Herrera's album release concert is at Bryant Park Jul. 21. See Calendar.

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Harry Allen Orchestra – *With Roses* (Triangle 7)
- Roxana Amed/Frank Carlberg – *Los Trabajos y Las Noches* (Sony Music Latin)
- Vicente Archer – *Short Stories* (Cellar Music)
- Luca Benedetti – *Ride Awhile* (s/r)
- Michael Bisio/Timothy Hill – *Inside Voice/Outside Voice* (Origin)
- Greg Chako (featuring Mason Daugherty) – *A Place for Bass Chamber Jazz Duets* (Mint 400)
- Matt Choboter – *Postcards of Nostalgia* (ILK Music)
- Karl Evangelista's Apura – *Ngayon* (Astral Spirits)
- George Freeman – *The Good Life* (HighNote)
- Satoko Fujii – *Torrent* (Piano Solo) (Libra)
- Phillip Johnston and the Greasy Chicken Orchestra – *I Cakewalked with a Zombie* (Earshift Music)
- Naïssam Jalal – *Healing Rituals* (Les Couleurs du Son)
- Johan Lindström – *& Norbotten Big Band* (Moserobie)
- David Mirarchi – *Ink Folly, Orchid Gleam* (Unbroken Sounds)
- Quartet San Francisco/Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band/Take Six – *Raymond Scott Reimagined* (Violinjazz)
- Tyshawn Sorey Trio – *Continuing* (Pi Recordings)
- Stephanie Wagner/Norbert Dömling – *Flute'N'Bass: Traces* (Unit)
- Tilo Weber – *Tesserae* (WeJazz)
- Tonwerkstatt-Kunstwesen (Acoustic Motion Concepts)
- Denny Zeitlin – *Crazy Rhythm: Exploring George Gershwin* (Solo Piano) (Sunnyside)