

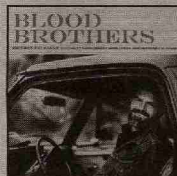
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## TRAX BY BLISS



**ALI SHAHEED MUHAMMAD/ADRIAN YOUNGE, *The Midnight Hour* (Linear Labs):**  
 ★★★½

Numerous friends grace A Tribe Called Quest's Muhammad and beatmaker/producer Younge's latest soul-jazz-hip-hop, Harlem Renaissance-inspired collaboration, from Bilal, CeeLo Green and Raphael Saadiq to ?uestlove and the late Luther Vandross. A radically re-orchestrated version of "So Amazing," with strings and a slinky bass line cradling Vandross' resurrected vocal, stands out; so do "Don't Keep Me Waiting," gorgeously intoned by UK soul singer Marsha Ambrosius, and funky instrumentals "Black Beacon" and "Redneph in B Minor," all sounding (especially kick drums and vocals) as if recorded in an intimate nightclub. Tunes start bleeding into one another during midway through these 20 tracks, but their creative musicality's refreshing. [linearlabsmusic.com](http://linearlabsmusic.com)



**JEFFREY FOUCAULT, *Blood Brothers* (Tone Tree):** ★★★★★

A literate, witty craftsman, Foucault doesn't make disposable music. Profound meaning's mined from daily simplicities throughout this nicely paced set, notably with the gospel-swaying "Dishes," tape-deck-referencing "Little Warble," dreamy title track and sweetly fingerpicked "Pretty Hands." Even seemingly lighthearted roadhouse rocker "War on the Radio," its hooks bolstered by Bo Ramsey's electric guitar and Eric Heywood's pedal steel, wields words like blades honed on the flint of conscience: "There's so many things to buy/ Desolation chief among them/ There's so many ways to die/ We're dying slow." A worthy addition to a valuable body of work. [jeffreyyoucault.com](http://jeffreyyoucault.com)



**DIALI CISSOKHO & KAIRA BA, *Routes* (Twelve/Eight):** ★★★★★

Kora maestro Cissokho recorded basic tracks with his Kaira Ba bandmates in his coastal hometown in Senegal, M'bour, then added various guests back home in North Carolina. Soulful B3 organ gives way to frenetic percussion during "Badima"; elsewhere, "Xarit" sweetly weaves kora and Tony Williamson's mandolin, while Shana Tucker and Tamisha's Waden's layered vocals enhance the gospel-y pulse of Cissokho's partly spoken "Story Song" and the moving "Saya," shadowed sympathetically by Eric Heywood's pedal steel. Bookending sounds of cicadas soothingly underscore natural bonds between continents and cultures. [kairabamusic.com](http://kairabamusic.com)



**LEVI PARHAM, *It's All Good* (Horton):**  
 ★★★½

The Oklahoma singer-songwriter dials up the funk for this earthy set recorded in Muscle Shoals with some of Tulsa's finest, including Jesse Aycock, Lauren Barth and John Fullbright. Parham's raspy soul and the band's jammy roadhouse feel (especially with "Badass Bob," "Boxmeer Blues" and "Kiss Me in the Morning") evoke '70s rockers like The Band, Little Feat and Van Morrison. Parham tugs heartstrings with acoustic ballad "All the Ways I Feel for You," but the album's ear-pleasing appeal lies in its convivial tribal spirit. [leviparham.com](http://leviparham.com)

