

The Audiophile Jazz Journal

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...for those who enjoy great recordings of great music.

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Welcome back Jazz Fans!

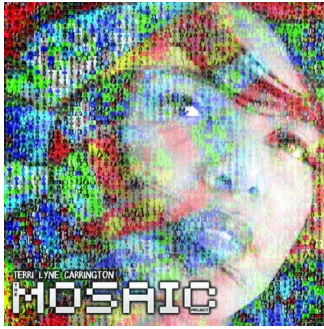
This issue reviews several different pieces of work, all good, some great. We take a look at six different pieces starting with Terri Lynne Carrington's "Mosaic". Next up is Dave Valentin's "Pure Imagination" Latin-jazz influenced new release(2011). "Forever" by Chic Corea, Stanley Clarke, and Lenny White get's the longest review this time; due partly to the fact that it is a two disc set with a collection of live performances captured from around the world. These first three discs reviewed are standard CD (Redbook) releases.

The next two reviews are of high quality Blue Note 45rpm vinyl reissues, distributed by Music Matters. Both are good, but "Johnny C" by Johnny Coles is GREAT! While we reviewed the vinyl version of "Johnny C", it is also available on XRCD. The Freddie Redd disc "Shades of Redd" is the second vinyl review. This title lags the pack this time out with a 3.5 of 5 rating, but is still a pretty good disc. This was one of Michael Fremer's "in heavy rotation" selections at one time.

Finally, "The Poll Winners" (Barney Kessel featuring Shelly Manne and Ray Brown) on JVC XRCD brings this issue to a close. "Last but certainly not least" is a true statement about this disc review. In fact, "last but best" is the most accurate. This XRCD was produced back in 1998 but is still readily available via Elusive Disc or Amazon. Originally recorded in 1957 on the Contemporary Records label, "Poll Winners" is yet another shining example of the fantastic work performed on these classic recordings by Alan Yoshida at JVC. The music was awarded 4.5 of 5 stars back in 1957 by Down Beat Magazine. Over 50 years later *The Audiophile Jazz Journal* awards it a 4.5 of 5 rating! The music, while not extremely complex in composition, is still completely engaging. These are mostly Jazz standards, performed eloquently and relaxed. It is most likely the artful simplicity of the trio arrangement, comprised of phenomenal musicians, that makes for such a great disc. While more modern recordings may have a bit more engineering perfection, there is just something very sumptuous, relaxed, perhaps "sexy" about the aura and 'air' of some of the older, simpler recordings when done correctly that just makes you smile.

Please continue to send me your nominations, suggestions, and feedback to:
DLS21@comcast.net, or just tell me when you see me!

ENJOY THE MUSIC!
Don



ARTIST: Terri Lyne Carrington
Title: "Mosaic" (The Mosaic Project)
Label: Concord Jazz (2011)
Format Reviewed: CD 
Music: 4.0
Audio Quality: 4.0

See Details and listen to audio samples:

http://www.amazon.com/Mosaic-Project-Terri-Lyne-Carrington/dp/B004ZQBP5O/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1315162811&sr=8-1

OK, I have to admit it, WOMEN ROCK! In this case, Women "DO JAZZ"! Not only do they do Jazz, they do it phenomenally well.

On "Mosaic", drummer Terri Lyne Carrington (tlc) assembles a line-up of incredible and all-star female musicians to assist her in executing her "project". This project is very much like the 'projects' assembled by Herbie Hancock. The primary artist surrounds themselves with incredible musicians, gives them great music to perform and then sort of gets out of the way.

Carrington brings to this disc one of the most in-depth arsenals of female musicianship I've ever seen. Beyond the female-only status required to participate in the project, the names that follow could be considered top-flight by ANY standard! I could (and will) list the artists for your reference, and then simply let you form your own predictions about what the disc would sound like. You would be correct if your conclusion included adjectives and expressive terms as "wow", "wonderful", "outstanding", "fabulous", or "exquisite".

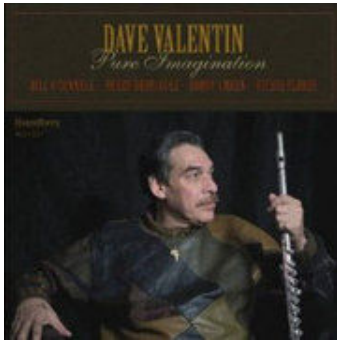
Here goes: Carrington (drums), Geri Allen (piano, keyboards), Dee Dee Bridgewater (vocals), Anat Cohen (clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano), Angela Davis (yes, 'that' Angela Davis! Spoken word), Sheila E. (percussion), Nona Hendrix (yes, 'that' Nona Hendrix!, vocals), Ingrid Jensen (Trumpet, Flugelhorn), Mimi Jones (bass), Carmen Lundy (Voice), Chi-Yin Carol Ma (violin), Halley Niswanger (flute), Gretchen Parlato (Vocals), Tineke Postma (Sax), Dianne Reeves (Vocals), Shea Rose (vocals), Patrice Rushen (piano, keyboards), Esperanza Spalding (Bass, Voice), Helen Sung (piano, keyboard), Linda Taylor (guitar), and Cassandra Wilson (vocals). ..WHEW! WHAT A LINEUP!

"Transformations", sung by Nona Hendrix kicks the disc off with a heavy bass groove and horns and keyboard effects mixed in. Hendrix's soulful voice is husky, yet delicate and articulate, a juxtaposition of her typically hard-edged style layered over a funk and jazz blend, makes for a very nice track. Almost every other track on the disc is fantastic. You'll hear a combination of Carrington originals, along with remade covers of Irving Berlin's "I Got Lost In His Arms", the Beatles' "Michelle", and Al Green's "Simply Beautiful" (sung by Cassandra Wilson). Another highlight is "Crayola", an Esperanza Spaulding track; that features the Grammy winner's dexterous Bass and articulate vocals. The remaining tracks are a mix of straight jazz and contemporary pieces, each with a different feel.

Mosaic represents a unique piece of work worthy of high praise and recognition for it's many angles of music influenced by a multitude of genre's from Classical to Rap. This is good material for your collection.

Be sure to tour Carrington's feature-filled site for a docu-video and photos of the sessions:

<http://www.terrilynecarrington.com/>



ARTIST: Dave Valentin
Title: "Pure Imagination"
Label: HighNote Records (2011)
Format Reviewed: CD 

Music: 4.0

Audio Quality: 4.0

See Details and listen to audio samples:

http://www.amazon.com/Pure-Imagination-Dave-Valentin/dp/B004YKB4ZC/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1315227647&sr=8-1

Dave Valentin is back again. This time, I believe he's set a new high for his work. Valentin puts together a tight, Latin-influenced quintet featuring his long-time musical partner on piano, Bill O'Connell. Valentin and O'Connell are joined by Ruben Rodriguez, Bass; Robby Ameen, Drums; and Richie Flores, percussion. Six of the nine tracks are written and arranged by O'Connell.

The music is what you'd expect from Latin-Jazz in one sense; lots of up-tempo samba, salsa, and percussive content. In another sense, there is a bit of the unexpected; such as the title track, a take on Gene Wilder's "Pure Imagination" from his legendary children's film, *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*...yes, "Willy Wonka"!! Additionally, the opening track, "Smile" is a Charlie Chaplin tune. Noticing a theme here? These two tunes, although both have comedic origins are FAR from laughable on this piece of work as Valentin and company treat these as beautiful, serious, and complete.

"Pure Imagination" is beautifully redone here. Robby Ameen's drumming is of key note as well on this track as it is an anchor to the track and boy is it captured with astonishing crispness and openness, along with the lead woodwind. Coming out of the quiet "Pure Imagination", Valentin and the band go straight into the driving tune "Hummingbird". While the rhythm section pushes a funky beat, Valentin's flute conveys images of guess what...yep a little Hummingbird buzzing around. Again, a great piece, again, with percussive treats and fantastic solos all around.

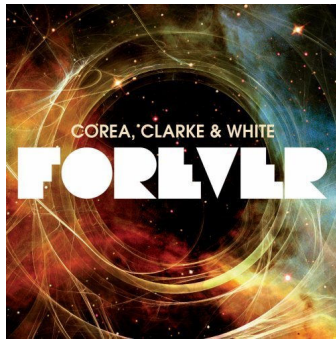
"See Saw" sneaks in next, and is a nice tune that cruises along, not hard hitting, but not solemn either. Expect more wonderful flute, layered on top of a TIGHT band featuring more great solos, particularly Bill O'Connell on keyboard. A real classic follows with Marvin Fischer's "When Sunny Gets Blue". The track starts with a Valentin flute solo (overdubbed with Alto and Bass Flute), and then evolves into the entire ensemble's slow swing. As you would perhaps anticipate, the song is wonderfully done here.

Up next is an R&B, funk-oriented track appropriately titled "Cat Man". This is a tune reminiscent of some of Valentin's 80's and 90's stint with the famous GRP label. (Sidenote: Dave Valentin was the FIRST artist to sign with Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen on the then upstart GRP Jazz label). The last track, is also appropriately titled "Last Minute". This tune really shines, with tempo and time signature shifts throughout the track. It also creates a sense of the musicians trying to perhaps squeeze in one more free-spirited jam session. You'll get more wonderful piano and flute improvisation, fast and hard hitting percussion, and a cool rhythm that carries you out to the end and leaves you feeling satisfied, although wanting more.


Each musician gets to really cut loose throughout the disc, which makes for VERY enjoyable music. Richie Flores' percussion is absolutely fantastic and is audio ear candy for your system. Valentin's flute is clean, crisp, articulate, and airy in the mix and has not a hint of shrill or sibilance in the recording.

NOTE: Check out the HighNote website: <http://www.jazzdepot.com/hn.html>

HighNote holds itself out as a high-quality audio label and this disc supports that claim. Check out the site for a complete list of outstanding artists on the label.



ARTIST: Chic Corea, Stanley Clarke, and Lenny White
Title: "Forever" (2 disc set)
Label: CONCORD Jazz Records (2011)

Format Reviewed: CD 

Music: 5.0

Audio Quality: 5.0

See Details and listen to audio samples:

[http://www.amazon.com/Forever-Clarke-Corea-](http://www.amazon.com/Forever-Clarke-Corea-White/dp/B004FRP4RS/ref=sr_1_1?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1315228363&sr=1-1)

[White/dp/B004FRP4RS/ref=sr_1_1?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1315228363&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Forever-Clarke-Corea-White/dp/B004FRP4RS/ref=sr_1_1?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1315228363&sr=1-1)

Ok, get ready! You know it's going to be good just by the names you see; Chic Corea, Stanley Clark, and Lenny White. This is one of the must haves for the year for sure. Disc one of the set is a compilation of some of the best performances of the 2009 tour by the artists and were captured in California, Seattle, and Tokyo. It features live acoustic sets of a few Jazz classics like "On Green Dolphin Street", "Waltz for Debbie", and Monk's "Hackensack". Additionally, you'll hear some Corea tunes that are redone from the 1970's Return to Forever projects, although done here in full acoustic method. Get ready for some outstanding live performances here. There is just enough audio of the audience to create the "live" experience. The recording engineers did a fantastic job of capturing the live performances. Since the venues were not huge arenas, but places like Yoshi's and Jazz Alley, there is a sense of intimacy and air without the effects of the facility mucking up things too terribly. Disc 2 is mostly a studio set with some premier guest artists including Bill Connors, Jean-Luc Ponty, and Chaka Khan.

Listening to Stanley Clark play the acoustic upright bass is a treat in itself. Of particular note is his solo at 3:54 on track 4, "La Cancion de Sofia". The solo runs all the way past the 7:22 mark and is just beautifully played and presented. The bass is warm, robust, big, and delicate all together, and Clarke shows his articulation AND his ability to remind you he can slam the bass strings as well.

Everyone expects, and ALWAYS receives remarkable performances by Chic Corea, and you get nothing less from him here, so I'll spare you more of the expected. Just know that you'll NEVER be disappointed with Chic's work anywhere on this, or for that matter any of his work.

What is impressive here though is to hear Lenny White in the Jazz environment again. White took to the R&B and Funk road post Return to Forever days. His return to the Jazz idiom here shows you how good this guy is. Although White plays with a powerful feel to most of his work, you'll experience great delicacy and subtlety on these tracks. His equipment is presented spatially across both channels however, and not anchored on either side except for on a few tracks. Track six "Hackensack" does though sit Lenny down mostly over on the left, and the track starts with his solo and gets swinging quickly. It is however at 4:14 that you'll get the "business". White takes off from that point all the way until about 6:50.

The last two tracks of disc one are two additional Corea and RTF tunes "No Mystery" and "Senor Mouse". Hearing these Jazz-Fusion tunes performed acoustically is a beautiful thing! Hang on for the ride!

That covers Disc 1. Now for Disc 2.

Disc 2 gets you out of the tour environment and into the studio, except for the last track, “500 Miles High”. “500” was recorded at the Monterey Jazz Festival in 2009. These tunes now bring back incorporating some electric instruments into play. Corea’s electric piano, Clarke on electric bass, Bill Connors’ electric guitar, and Jean-Luc Ponty’s electro-acoustic violin.

Although the early fusion feel returns to disc 2, this is a newer, somewhat “softer” side to the early tunes. The tunes are not really “soft”, but perhaps a bit more refined than the original performances.

Track 4, “Armando’s Rhumba” features Ponty on violin, accompanied by Corea on piano, and Clarke on Acoustic Bass. No electric instruments here.

One of my all time favorite tracks follows with “Renaissance”, this time done in a more subtle, “stripped-down” kind of way. Is it ok to keep pressing the “Back” button on the remote so many times at the end of the tune?!? Ponty, Clarke, and Corea show you here why they are virtuoso musicians, and White keeps the groove moving the entire way.

Chaka Khan appears on the track “High Wire – The Aerialist”. Her unmistakable voice is velvety smooth and sharp but what is interesting, is there is none of the typical Chaka soulfulness. She sounds mostly like a ‘Jazz’ singer, not a Soul singer performing jazz...very nice though. She appears again on the next track, Gershwin’s “I Loves You Porgy”. We get a taste of the soulful Chaka, but she again stays in the left lane by keeping her phrasing and tonality more ‘jazz-like’...but still very good. This is after all a “Jazz” piece of work, correct? Yes, but when you hear Chaka, you sort of want “CHAKA”!

“After the Cosmic Rain” gets the electric bass going, supporting classic fusion keys, guitar, and Ponty’s electric violin. Get prepared for a funk-fest near the end of the track. “Space Circus” gets the funk groove going again, and has a feel of Corea’s 1990’s *Electric Band* projects. Ponty shows up again to put his touch on things. “Modern” Fusion at it’s best!

Rounding out disc 2 is another all time favorite, done and redone, many times over, by many Jazz artists is “500 Miles High”. The tune begins with a Corea solo and launches with the famous chorus line, then takes off on a wonderful trip of the tune, featuring just Corea on piano, Clarke on Acoustic Bass, and White on drums. There is something about hearing that classic bass line on a big acoustic that is simply intoxicating. Sit back and enjoy the ride!

Check out lots of info on these guys and this project on their sites as well:

<http://ccwtrio.chickcorea.com/#>

<http://www.chickcorea.com/#>

<http://www.stanleyclarke.com/>

<http://www.lennywhite.com/>



ARTIST: Johnny Coles
Title: "Little Johnny C"
Label: Music Matters (2008)
Blue Note Reissue (Limited Edition)
Format Reviewed: LP 45rpm 180g Vinyl (2 discs)
Music: 5.0
Audio Quality: 5.0

See Details and listen to audio samples:

http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dpopular&field-keywords=kevin+eubanks+zen+food&x=23&y=28

Johnny Coles is now one of my all time favorites! "Little Johnny C" has in one listen, moved from the unfamiliar to the top of the list! This is a swinging list of tracks that will get you bobbing your head and tapping your toes from the first note.

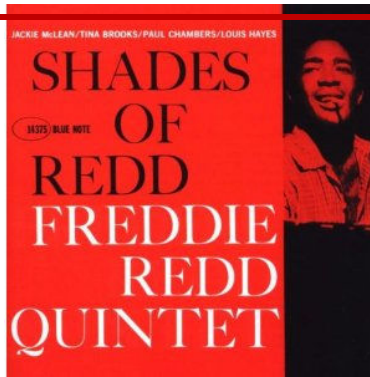
Johnny Coles on Trumpet has a real gem of a band on this 1963 session. Leo Wright, Alto Sax and Flute; Joe Henderson, Tenor Sax; Duke Pearson, Piano; Bob Crenshaw, Bass; Walter Perkins and Pete La Roca, Drums. Every musician gets to cut loose throughout the tracks. Coles trumpet sizzles and his blazing fast fingering of the valves is phenomenal.

Track one is the title track "Little Johnny C" and features Coles and Wright playing in tandem, and Henderson's big tenor highlighted big and bold. The second track, "Hobo Joe" slows the pace down with a funky Blues and Latin mixed three-four beat. Coles again is brilliant and the tune grooves from start to finish. Pearson gets to show off on the Ivory keys and Wright and Henderson's saxes are fluid and sharp. A big Henderson improv on tenor is isolated on the right channel and so well done, you see him right there in front of you. Bob Crenshaw keeps his Bass on pace and the two drummers push the tracks along. Side Two contains track 3, "Jano" and gets the band back to a big-time swing with more fantastic Trumpet and Sax improvisations and solos.

EVERY track on this LP is outstanding, so you can safely know that the final three tracks are equally engaging and awesome. Only the last track (Side 4) "So Sweet My Little Girl" lets the band take a break with a quiet melody. The tune is a quiet melody and was written as a tribute to Pearson's, at the time, seven year old daughter, Cynthia.

The Music Matters treatment of the tunes is especially well-done. Each instrument is isolated and clearly placed in the soundstage. The 45rpm discs really shine and keep the instruments extremely well focused in the mix. Of note; Music Matters made an interesting discovery during their initial evaluation and auditions of the master tapes. They recognized that it was the "original" mono versions of the Blue Note works that they knew audiophiles most often desired. While auditioning the "original" mono tapes, it was discovered that the sessions recorded after October 1958 had actually been captured in stereo. These stereo versions (thought to have been simultaneously recorded with the mono versions), sounded far better than the mono versions. The "mono" versions had actually been created by "folding down" the stereo tapes into dual mono. In addition, the gatefold jackets are another nice touch with original artwork on the outside covers and exclusive, high quality black and white photos of the musicians in session are inside and are absolutely fantastic. The jackets and photos are works of art on their own.

Combine great music, presented nostalgically on vinyl, in audiophile quality, with fantastic artwork and photos and you just can't beat it.



| | |
|------------------|---|
| ARTIST: | Freddie Redd Quintet |
| Title: | "Shades of Redd" |
| Label: | Music Matters (2009) Blue Note Reissue (Limited Edition) |
| Format Reviewed: | LP 45rpm 180g Vinyl (2 Discs) |
| Performance: | 3.5 |
| Audio Quality: | 3.0 |

See Details and listen to audio samples:

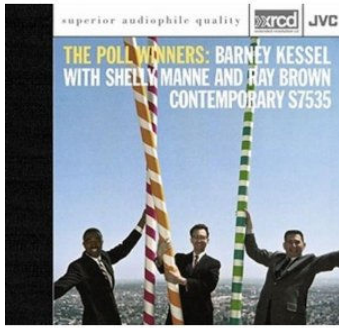
http://www.amazon.com/Shades-Redd-Freddie-Quintet/dp/B0009OAU7K/ref=sr_1_6?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1315782727&sr=1-6


Freddie Redd? Who is that? Well he is a pianist worthy of being called one of the greats. Freddie Redd is best known for his stage and theater work in the late 1950's early 1960's. On "Shades of Redd", a tight little ensemble is built that really gets swinging. Jackie McLean, alto sax; Tina Brooks, tenor sax; Paul Chambers, bass; and Louis Hayes, drums make up the rest of the quintet. While Redd's playing is good, he's not the most accurate of players in certain places, however.

The rest of the quintet does a fine job of carrying the tunes and executing on the scores. Jackie McLean's alto sax and Tina Brooks' tenor sax are the highlight of the LP, particularly in their many synchronized melodies. Paul Chambers' on bass keeps a steady bounce to the swing tracks, and Louis Hayes on drums keeps all the rhythms tight and moving forward.

The recording transfer on "Shades of Redd" is a bit thin and coarse compared to many of the other Blue Note remasters. This is almost certainly the result of the quality of the master tapes, as the previously reviewed discs by Johnny Coles is significantly sharper, detailed, and offers a much higher level of resolution and depth of the soundstage.

Enjoy the tracks on "Shades of Redd" as good representative work of the late 1950's and early 1960's Jazz artists.



ARTIST: Barney Kessel (with Shelly Manne and Ray Brown)
Title: "The Poll Winners"
Label: Contemporary Records (1957)
Format Reviewed: JVC XRCD (1988) 



Performance: 4.5
Audio Quality: 5.0

Selection of the Issue!

See Details and listen to audio samples:

<http://www.elusivedisc.com/prodinfo.asp?number=JVCXR-0019>

Barney Kessel's velvety smooth guitar sound is "Muzak Smooth". So how would the performance rate 4.5 if it sounds like Muzak you ask? Well, it doesn't sound like Muzak, his fluid playing is simply as smooth as Muzak! Kessel's distinct guitar sound is articulate everywhere and has a laid back, relaxed demeanor compared to many other Jazz guitarists. The trio, made up of Kessel, Ray Brown (bass), and Shelly Manne (drums), is extremely tight on this recording. They seem symbiotically connected in some of the pieces, as the precise hand-offs between each other are essentially flawless.

What makes this recording so incredible beyond the fantastic music, is that this JVC XRCD is absolutely one of the best I've heard of this period material. The session was captured in 1957 in Contemporary Records studios in Los Angeles, California. First of all Kessel's guitar is firmly planted on the left and is so well recorded, you here each note played flawlessly. The sound of the guitar is lush, robust, and crisp and fills the left channel with warm, beautiful tones. Ray Brown's bass and Manne's drums make up the rhythm section and are anchored on the right channel.

The opening track, "Jordo" is a toe-tapping swing that is fun and energetic. Manne's drumming is a particularly fun treat. The way the drum set is mic'd, every brush stroke, and lick is captured in detail. The Ellington classic "Satin Doll" arrives next and slows down the excitement a bit, with no less spectacular recording qualities. The rest of the disc is a combination of Jazz classics like "On Green Dolphin Street", and Kessel-written pieces. All of the tunes are wonderfully done, without a single weak link on the disc.

The XRCD is incredibly lush and the warm trio tones are so well transferred, you'll think your listening to even higher resolution material. This is another Alan Yoshida mastered work. You better get this one. It's still available currently at Amazon and Elusive Disc.