

ings. The inclusion of Harold Arlen's perennial "Stormy Weather" is a nice selection and shows Reeves incredible range as an artist of both standards and further reaching works.

A dozen tracks in all, *Beautiful Life* summarizes an artist in the prime of her career, able to walk that fine line and merge artistic vision with commercial intent.



Pete Robbins

PYRAMID—Hate Laugh Music 003. Web: PeteRobbins.com. *Sweet Child o' Mine; Hallelujah; Vorp; Wichita Lineman; Intravenous; Lithium; Equipoise; Too High; Pyramid*

PERSONNEL: Pete Robbins, alto saxophone, clarinet; Vijay Iyer, acoustic piano; Eivind Opsvik, acoustic bass; Tyshawn Sorey, drums

By Alex Henderson

Performing jazz interpretations of rock and R&B songs is not a brand-new idea. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, there were organ combos that would put an instrumental jazz spin on the music of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Sly & the Family Stone, Marvin Gaye or the Doors. The late organist Charles Earland, for example, came up with some interesting arrangements of the 5th Dimension's "Aquarius" and the Spiral Staircase's "More Today Than Yesterday" (which became his theme song) on his *Black Talk* album of 1969. But for many years, there were way too many jazz musicians (both singers and instrumentalists) who didn't see things Earland's way. They believed that worthwhile popular music ended with Tin Pan Alley and failed to recognize the jazz potential of rock and R&B material—and although many "smooth jazz" artists wouldn't shy away from performing something by Earth, Wind & Fire or Rod Stewart, it was often meaningless because they would perform boring, robotic note-for-note covers that lacked soul, imagination and depth. Thankfully, the situation has improved in recent years: the number of jazz improvisers who see the improvisatory value of rock or R&B songs has been increasing with groups like the Bad Plus and the Philadelphia-based Modern Rock Quartet. And on *Pyramid*, post-bop alto saxophonist Pete Robbins is as improvisatory on songs by Nirvana, Guns N' Roses, Leonard Cohen and Stevie Wonder as he is on his own compositions.

Melodically, harmonically and rhythmically, *Pyramid* is very much a straight-ahead post-bop album—and Robbins leads a cohesive, acoustic-oriented quartet that employs Vijay Iyer on piano, Eivind Opsvik on bass and Tyshawn Sorey on drums. *Pyramid* is not fusion any more than it is jazz-funk; *Pyramid* is post-bop all the way. But Robbins and his three sidemen don't maintain that post-bop atmosphere with any of

the usual Cedar Walton, Wayne Shorter or McCoy Tyner standards. Instead, they do it with four Robbins originals ("Vorp," "Intravenous," "Equipoise" and the title track) and popular songs that include Guns N' Roses' "Sweet Child o' Mine" (which finds Robbins switching to clarinet), Nirvana's "Lithium," Stevie Wonder's "Too High," Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" and Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman." Robbins' sources are certainly diverse: "Too High" came out 1970s soul/funk, while "Sweet Child o' Mine" was on Guns N' Roses' *Appetite for Destruction* album and epitomized 1980s Sunset Strip hard rock/heavy metal—and "Lithium" (which appeared on Nirvana's seminal *Nevermind* album of 1991) was the essence of early 1990s grunge. "Wichita Lineman," meanwhile, was a major hit for country-pop/soft rock star Glen Campbell in 1968. But the fact that Robbins is using soul/funk, metal/hard rock, grunge and country-pop as source material doesn't mean that he compromises his improvisatory outlook one bit. *Pyramid* thrives on improvisation.

A lot of "smooth jazz" stars would have turned "Wichita Lineman" into pure mush, totally ignoring the song's nuance and emotional complexity. But Robbins isn't "smooth jazz," and he approaches "Wichita Lineman" as a vehicle for serious post-bop introspection. There is nothing ironic about the way Robbins' quartet approaches "Wichita Lineman," "Sweet Child o' Mine," "Too High," "Hallelujah" or "Lithium"; he realizes that there is lot of depth in these songs and acts accordingly. "Too High," it should be noted, has been receiving jazz explorations for 40 years. Wonder included the song on his classic *Immersions* album of 1973, and that same year, the late saxophonist Joe Farrell turned it into a 13-minute jazz-funk workout on his *Penny Arcade* album (which Creed Taylor produced for his CTI label and boasted Rudy Van Gelder as engineer). But Robbins approaches "Too High" on his own post-bop terms, and his version sounds totally personal.

It would have been nice if Robbins had offered some liner notes with *Pyramid*. Liner notes are a valuable part of the jazz experience, and *Pyramid* could have used some liner notes that explained the importance of these songs and how nicely they fit into post-bop expression. *Pyramid* is too interesting an album to be without liner notes. Regardless, *Pyramid* is a consistently memorable effort from Robbins and his colleagues.



Edward Simon

VENEZUELAN SUITE – Sunnyside 1382 – *Venezuela Suite: Barinas, Caracas, Merida, Maracaibo; El Diablo Suelto*

PERSONNEL: Edward Simon, piano; Marco

"Truth is by nature self-evident. As soon as you remove the cobwebs of ignorance that surround it, it shines clear."

Mahatma Gandhi

Granados, flutes; Mark Turner, tenor; John Ellis, bass clarinet; Jorge Glem, cuatro; Roberto Koch, bass; Adam Cruz, drums; Luis Quintero, percussion; Leonardo Granados, maracas; Edmar Castaneda, harp

By Scott Yanow

Most jazz musicians from countries other than the United States begin their careers playing standards and doing their best to emulate their idols. Usually years after they master the basics and learn the repertoire, they rediscover their roots and find a way to mix together the influence of their country's musical heritage with modern jazz.

Edward Simon, who was born and raised in Venezuela, was well aware of his musical roots from the beginning. He went to the United States when he was 15, studying both classical music and jazz. He gained important experience as a member of Bobby Watson's Horizon during 1989-94, worked with many notables (including Paquito D'Rivera, Herbie Mann, Bobby Hutcherson, Jerry Gonzalez, Arturo Sandoval and Don Byron), and spent a long period playing with Terence Blanchard's quintet.

However from the very first CD that he led (back in 1994), he has written music inspired by Venezuela for part of his repertoire. In 2003 he founded Ensemble Venezuela specifically as a way to find common ground between jazz and the music of Venezuela. In 2005 Chamber Music America awarded him a grant to compose the "Venezuelan Suite." But while he and his group have performed the suite on numerous occasions, only recently was it finally recorded.

Ensemble Venezuela is an intriguing and colorful ten-piece group consisting of flute, tenor sax, bass clarinet, Simon's piano, bass, drums, percussion, maracas, harp and the cuatro (a small acoustic guitar). Tenor-saxophonist Mark Turner, John Ellis (who plays bass clarinet with the group) and drummer Adam Cruz are the best known of the sidemen to jazz listeners. Of the other musicians, Marco Granados is a brilliant flutist with a beautiful tone who has performed in jazz, classical and folk music settings. Jorge Glem from Venezuela gets an awful lot of music out of the cuatro and is very well known in his native land. Bassist Roberto Koch, who is also

Visit
www.JazzNewswire.com

from Venezuela, is known for his versatility and has worked with many jazz artists, both in the U.S. and in Venezuela. Leonardo Granados, who plays maracas with the group, is also a singer of boleros and tangos. Harpist Edmar Castaneda, who adds to the color of the group, is from Columbia and has been part of the New York jazz scene since the late 1990s while percussionist Luis Quintero has been on a countless number of sessions.

The four-part Venezuelan Suite finds Simon making liberal use of the wide variety of colors that are possible with this instrumentation. The jazz waltz "Barinas" has Granados' flute in the lead for much of the time and includes inventive solos by Simon, and bassist Koch and a passionate improvisation by Glem on his cuatro. "Caracas," which is in 5/4 time, build gradually with Ellis' bass clarinet (playing over the stimulating rhythm section and very active bass playing by Koch) emerging as the star.

"Merida" has a beautiful romantic theme with interplay by the flute and bass clarinet and some attractive colors from the horns during Simon's piano solo. The suite concludes with "Maracaibo" which is more intense with spots for Mark Turner's tenor and drummer Adam Cruz that bring the suite to its climax.

Also on this CD is "El Diablo Suelto," an episodic performance that has many short statements from the musicians with Glem and the fluent Granados taking honors.

This is a delightful CD well worth savoring several times.



Camille Thurman

ORIGINS — Hot Tone Music HTM 102 — www.CamilleThurmanMusic.com. *Forward Motion; A Change Of Mind; Indigo Moments; Origins; The Dreamweaver; Anna's Joy; In Duettime; Kindred Minds; Felix's Groove; Jitterbug Waltz; Pursuit With A Purpose; Please Be Kind; Revisiting The Past*

PERSONNEL: Camille Thurman, tenor, soprano, flute, vocals; Enoch Smith Jr., Luis Perdomo, piano; Corcoran Holt, bass; Rudy Royston, drums; Shirazette Tinnin, drums, cajon; Brandee Younger, harp
By Scott Yanow

It is obvious, from just hearing the opening selection of Camille Thurman's *Origins* CD that the young saxophonist can play. Although many in the jazz world (myself included) had not really heard of her before, it is a sure bet that we will be hearing from her a great deal in the future.

Camille Thurman sang from an early age, began playing the flute when she was 12, and

took up the tenor at 14. While she studied music extensively, she actually earned a degree in Geology & Environmental Sciences from Binghamton University. Despite that, after graduation she began playing music regularly in New York. She started off playing with trumpeter Valery Ponomarev including in his big band and has since worked with Hamiet Bluiett, Gabriel Alegria's Afro-Peruvian Sextet, Benny Golson, George Coleman, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Terri Lyne Carrington, Russell Malone, Nicholas Payton, George Benson, Charli Persip, Lew Tabackin, and Dave Valentin plus quite a few names from the r&b world including Chaka Khan and India Arie. She also regularly leads her own quartet and has performed in a variety of countries including Israel. All in all, she has already accomplished a lot but is still just at the beginning of her career.

On *Origins*, Camille Thurman's tone sometimes hints at Houston Person and Stanley Turrentine but she has a slightly more modern style. She proves to be quite fearless throughout, taking a few unusual chances while managing to always sound relaxed. And it should not be overlooked that she composed all but two of the 13 songs.

The opening number, "Forward Motion," is quite unusual in that the first solo after the melody is taken by drummer Rudy Royston. It is kind of refreshing to hear a drum solo on the first song rather than the final one! After the drum spot, Thurman plays unaccompanied tenor at first before gradually being joined by drums and bass. She displays a large tone and fluent technique, playing fairly free in spots but always with a purpose.

"A Change Of Mind" introduces her likable voice with some scatting and impressive high notes. "Indigo Moments" is a feature for her soprano while "Origins" is an uptempo post bop original that has Thurman playing some high-powered yet relaxed tenor.

"The Dreamweaver" features the only appearance by harpist Brandee Younger who contributes a beautiful solo and accompaniment to Thurman's soprano. She deserves to be much better known.

"Anna's Joy" is a brief unaccompanied wordless vocal that displays Camille Thurman's scatting abilities. It leads logically into "In Duettime" which has a bit of flute and more scatting (she has quite a range) along with a fine piano solo by Luis Perdomo.

Throughout this set, Camille Thurman avoids two of the common faults of younger jazz musicians: taking overly long solos and being unable to play ballads without constant double-timing. On the ballad "Kindred Minds," she lets the melody breathe. "Felix's Groove" is an unaccompanied tenor solo played with some multiphonics, but it is actually a brief interlude that leads into Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz." Thurman changes the accents and phrasing of the vintage melody and the solo section finds the song being played as a romp rather than a waltz.

"Pursuit With A Purpose," which is played as a jazz waltz, is one of her stronger melodies and it features a passionate tenor solo along with nice spots for pianist Enoch Smith Jr. and bassist Corcoran Holt (who plays powerfully throughout

WANT MORE WEB TRAFFIC?

Get Your Next PRESS RELEASE or VIDEO PRESS RELEASE Onto PAGE ONE Searches In 27 Minutes!

- Powerful Press Release Writing
- Expert Search Engine Optimization
- Expansive Distribution
- FAST Turnaround

Increase Your Traffic, Sales & Authority Reach
Thousands of
PRINT, BROADCAST & ONLINE MEDIA
via Google, Bing, Yahoo Search Engines
**PLUS Social Media & Bookmarking Sites, Article
Directories, PR Sites, Video / Photo Sites,
Authority Sites, RSS Feeds, Wikis, Blogs & more.**

Get The Results & Reporting That You Deserve!

PressReleaseMarketers.com | 215-887-8880