



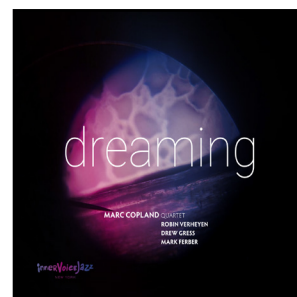
to the eyes that remain soft
Samantha Kochis (s/r)
by Sophia Valera Heinecke

flutist Samantha Kochis' *to the eyes that remain soft* is a testament to her unique musical journey. The positive solitude experienced during this residency followed a more difficult period at the start of 2023, which she terms as "that monastery time." The solitude that birthed the music began with a single dream that inspired a writing session that generated the recording (and also the musicians who ended up recording on it). It presents a reflection on resilience and creativity in Kochis' development, showcasing her talents on flute and piccolo as well as her ability to attract musical cohorts, which she does regularly in her co-founding and co-curating of the Phonotonic concert series (which spotlights female, nonbinary and trans musicians who specialize in experimental and improvised music). This journey also included explorations on the mountain dulcimer, the only instrument Kochis could play for months when she was suddenly stricken with shortness of breath and inflammation that made talking, chewing and breathing difficult.

The album opens with "every breath is a sweet reminder of my existence". The flute slides in tenderly, holding a pensive and steadily flourishing space. The vibraphone, played by Selendis Sebastian Alexander Johnson, is a musical partner throughout, creating distance and deepening of Kochis' soaring flute lines. Anchored by bassist Anna Abondolo, the feel is organic. The distinct sound of the final movement is created by every ensemble member applying a bow to their instruments—from cymbals, vibraphone and cello to mountain dulcimer. The bassist bows from the bottom to the top of her upright, slowly and in one direction. Her timing is euphoric. The continuous duality of tones evokes the ancient, like throat singing or birds able to sing two tones simultaneously. Drummer Josh Mathews ends the track with elegant percussion on a jazzy note. On "first unnoticed, once observed, now beautiful", metallic revolutions on the cymbals sound both distant and close, making time feel tangibly natural, like the sun rising; across the album there is a feeling of nature being emulated. The lead-out, "we can have better dreams", is another stunning group piece, prismatic in its invitation to analyze, separate and reflect on the music that preceded it.

Patternless but soothing, tender and inviting, *to the eyes that remain soft* highlights the act of creation as a strategy to move beyond physical suffering.

For more info visit samanthakochis.com. Kochis is at The Record Shop Oct. 25. See Calendar.



Dreaming
Marc Copland (innerVoice Jazz)
by Ken Dryden

Originally an alto saxophonist, Marc Copland found his calling as a pianist and bandleader and, after recording for several different labels, he founded innerVoice Jazz a few years ago. He features the same quartet on his new album *Dreaming* as on the prior release *Someday* (2022), with Robin Verheyen (soprano, tenor), long-time collaborator Drew Gress (bass) and Mark Ferber (drums). The session has the feeling that the quartet road-tested these songs for audiences: everything seems to fall into place in

these challenging originals, along with the leader's arrangements of two decades-old selections.

The album opener is an infrequently performed Thelonious Monk composition, "Eronel", a piece deserving of wider appreciation. The quartet digs into the work and captures its upbeat, quirky air, as the leader's constantly shifting piano and Verheyen's playful soprano are full of humor. There is also a bonus alternate take, available exclusively by download with the purchase of the CD (it was likely a close call to choose between them for the master take). Copland's "LST" isn't named for the WWII vessel, it's an acronym for "Little Swing Tune". The brisk piece builds from a simple riff and develops into a solid bop vehicle with a potent rhythmic drive behind the saxophonist's bristling tenor and the leader's richly textured piano.

Copland not only features his musicians extensively but also encourages them to contribute original compositions. Gress penned the mysterious, tense ballad "Dreaming", which borders on conveying the air of a nightmare at times. The pianist's rich harmonics and unison lines with Verheyen's tenor lead into the composer's creative solo. The bassist's "Figment" has a similar flavor, though it is more dramatic and strident, as the intensity builds upon its wistful theme. The saxophonist contributed the infectious post-bop anthem "Destination Unknown", as well as the haunting "Passing Through". To close the album, Copland takes a fresh approach to the oft-recorded standard "Yesterdays", setting the mood for an inventive interpretation with a dissonant introduction and adventurous solo, while Verheyen's tenor playing also avoids predictable paths. The superb rhythm section work of Gress and Ferber keep the piece on edge as well. The only disappointment is the fade out of this track, though Copland presumably wanted listeners to imagine their own ending.

For more info visit innervoicjazz.com. Copland is at Mezzrow Oct. 4-5. See Calendar.



A Kiss for Brazil
Karrin Allyson (Origin)
by Fred Bouchard

There's a catchy earworm refrain for "Wave", a consequence of Antonio Carlos Jobim writing the English version of "Vou Te Contar". The music and lyric of "The fundamental loneliness goes when two can dream a dream together" helped nudge a sly, sibilant tsunami throughout global music in the '60s via the new form of bossa nova. In *A Kiss for Brazil*, five-time Grammy nominee Karrin Allyson catches this wave with the grace and gusto of a Rio surfer, her third album dedicated to Brazil's musical glory, with her widely-spaced prior albums being *From Paris to Rio* (1999) and *Imagina* (2008).

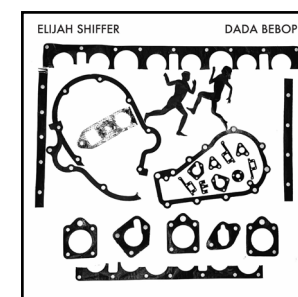
The genesis of *A Kiss for Brazil* began when Allyson learned that Rosa Passos was passing through New York, and so invited the veteran Brazilian singer-guitarist-composer to cut a few tracks. The result was Passos contributing to two of the album's ten tracks. "Month of March in Salvador (Dunas)" is a relaxed, breathless bouncer, with Passos wistful yet piquant and both amiably weaving scat on the fade. Passos sings Jobim's "O Grande Amor", fragile and resilient

as an orchid, while Allyson translates on the second chorus as Passos floats a wispy vocal filigree, leading to a graceful sharing of the final chorus. The opener, Djavan's "Flor de Lis", unveils Allyson's meticulous command of the Brazilian ethos, a tender-tough vibe with impassioned scatting. Other hits emerge as the band cozies up: a smoldering "The Island", a lilting "So Many Stars" by the Bergmans and late Sérgio Mendes (sweet accordion!), and Allyson running kittenish to joyous shout on Luiz Bonfá's mega-hit "Manha de Carnaval".

Your reviewer first encountered the redoubtable, exuberant bassist Harvie S in 1975, deeply engaged in another power duo—with vocalist Sheila Jordan. Then as now, S responds all-in with empathy and passion, and solos on "The Gift" and the warm coda, a duo (Allyson on piano) of Benny Carter's "Only Trust Your Heart". (The bassist also recommended the studio and even pitched in with the mixing.) Graciously complementary bandmates are Vitor Gonçalves (keyboards, accordion), Yotam Silberstein (guitar) and Rafael Barata (drums). "Antigua", a particularly juicy exercise in Jobim's lyric-free pixelic acrobatics, elicits the band's best: Barata's cymbal wash, Gonçalves' delicate piano, Silberstein's gently bluesy guitar.

Each track brings smiles to the ear and celebrates Brazil's musical buoyancy, catching Jobim's wave and dreaming their dreams together.

For more info visit originarts.com. The album release concert is at Birdland Oct. 29-Nov. 2. See Calendar.



Dada Bebop
Elijah Shiffer (Star Jelly)
by Terrell K. Holmes

In 1916, two years into the devastation of World War I, a gathering of primarily visual artists at a Zürich café gave rise to the Dada movement, created in protest of the so-called "war to end all wars." Its aim was to create new artistic traditions through the commentary of satire and absurdity. Saxophonist Elijah Shiffer brings the tradition into the 21st century with *Dada Bebop*, an album that honors jazz by turning it sideways and shifting its angles in ways that are vivid, sometimes riotous and always entertaining.

Throughout, Shiffer (alto), Christian Cail (guitar) and Dmitry Ishenko (bass), bob and weave at familiar melodies, embroider them deftly, manipulate tempos, and incorporate these elements brilliantly into their exuberant idiom. They also convey an indomitable sense of individuality, such as on "Blue Blonk", a tune based on the changes of "I Saw A Wobbzag" by the Dada-influenced Dutch vocalist Jaap Blonk. The interpretation honors the blues, soulfully and humorously. The intriguing "Macaronic" blends iconoclasm with standards. While the tune has bloodlines from the standards "All the Things You Are" and "I'll Remember April", the bass line is derived from the vocal poem "Ursonate" by Kurt Schwitters, a defining work in the Dadaist canon (and one that also influenced Blonk). The fine addition of Kevin Sun (tenor) enhances the song's polyglot theme. The delightfully funky "Pom Pom" shouts out to "Mop Mop", a tune recorded by Louis Armstrong. A series of crisp solos by Shiffer,

Hayoung Lyou (piano), Darren Johnston (trumpet) and James Paul Nadien (drums) make for a dynamite take on the late pianist Elmo Hope's "One for Joe". Another straight-ahead gem, "Late-Lee", has a nice call and response between Shiffer and Johnston. "You Stepped On My Dream", with its wry smile of a title, is a lovely blues.

The influence of Charlie Parker reveals itself throughout the album, specifically on two songs: "Birdlesque" is a light-footed take on "Koko", transforming that landmark recording and remaining every bit as energetic and inventive, while the title and head of "Scramble from the Ramble" references Parker's "Scrapple from the Apple" but is based on the structure of Charles Mingus' "Parkeriana". Shiffer also includes alto renderings of numerous bird calls in the latter tune.

Ultimately, whether it's through Dada or bebop or ornithology, musicianship has to be the payoff, and *Dada Bebop* is an excellent blend of style and substance.

For more info visit elijahshiffer.com. Shiffer's *Dada Bebop Quartet* is at Ibeam Brooklyn Oct. 20. See Calendar.



Alone
Wayne Escoffery (Smoke Sessions)
by Jeff Cebulski

Tenor saxophonist Wayne Escoffery's new *Smoke Sessions* album *Alone* emanates from an introspective period last year when the artist had to cope with loss—of a relationship, of friends, of even the ability to play due to an injured finger. To deal with such setbacks, he took a sabbatical and conceptualized a collection of originals and other songs that allowed him to use his instrument as an emotive and perhaps self-therapeutic device to draw him out of his funk. While it's safe to say that Escoffery's deep tone and exacting performance style remain, *Alone* is not necessarily striking or particularly energetic *per se*. Yet the lack of verve doesn't diminish the quality.

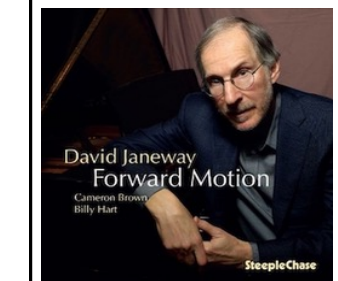
Escoffery's lyrical bent, excellent ensemble and pristine production lifts what could be a burdensome event into something that draws in the empathetic listener. To support his thematic collection, he gathered a formidable cadre of veterans: Gerald Clayton (piano), Ron Carter (bass) and Carl Allen (drums). All play with a profound sensitivity to the saxophonist's aims, never pushing the beat beyond the saxophonist's established pace that places his rich tenor in the middle of all expression.

The opener, "Moments with You", sets the tone: a slow and luxurious ballad that on another album might signify a romantic theme. But then the title track, a gently loping muse on solitude is presented, and competing feelings begin. Harold Land's "Rapture", a brighter recollection, suggests the lingering memory of erotic love. Another opposite idea occurs as the modal "The Ice Queen" (not necessarily based on the artist's former flame) is juxtaposed. The emotive back-and-forth continues with the classic "The Shadow of Your Smile", opened by Clayton's quietly ominous passage that is responded to by some of Escoffery's more rugged blowing, followed by Carter's "Blues for D.P.", which brightens the mood a bit with a soft swing bolstered by the esteemed bassist. The saxophonist

delivers his solo as if he were proclaiming a release from emotional jail. The two standards "Stella by Starlight" and "Since I Fell for You" give the album a dignified, positive closing, the latter song enhanced by the leader's wry improvisation, suggesting his perspective is placed on solid ground.

The overall result is a combination of narrative and sincere emotion, with Escoffery's evident disappointment melded to the joy of memory and the hope of music's ability to help the artist rise above the depths and appreciate the experience of love.

For more info visit smokesessionsrecords.com. Escoffery is at Dizzy's Club with Amina Figarova Oct. 4-6. See Calendar.



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