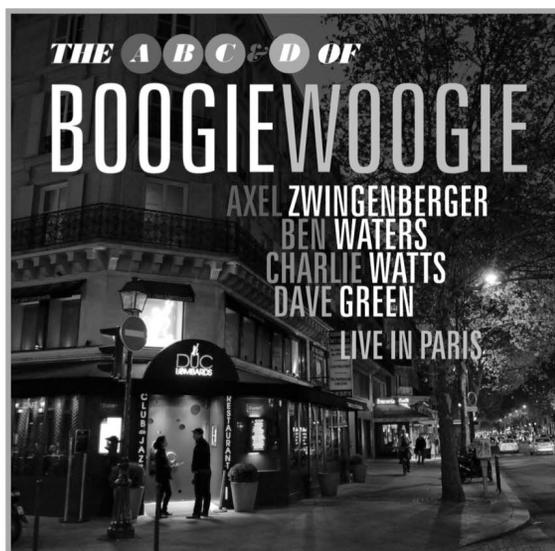


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You might not think there's room in the universe for another Thelonious Monk tribute. But pianist **Eric Reed**'s two most recent Savant discs, *The Dancing Monk* and *The Baddest Monk*, aren't retreads in any sense: they're consistently fresh and insightful, not to mention flat-out swinging. Leading a quintet in a late Saturday set at Dizzy's Club (Jun. 2nd), Reed found uncommon routes through Monk's already uncommon music. Even the stage setup was odd: piano dead center, with the horns (trumpeter Etienne Charles, tenor saxophonist Seamus Blake) at stage right behind Reed's back. This put the leader in closer quarters with bassist Matt Clohesy and drummer Kevin Kanner and the communication flowed. For the most part, Reed eschewed conventional solo order and split choruses up in different ways: Blake and Charles alternated just the bridges on "Rhythm-a-ning", stayed mum until the trading with Kanner on "Pannonica" and reveled in continuous trading with the full band on the closing "Epistrophe". After "Four In One", featuring a staggeringly inventive Reed solo, Blake and Charles left the bandstand altogether. Reed eased into "Round Midnight", modifying the coda into an extended vamp. He segued directly into "Bright Mississippi", taken at breakneck speed and partially reharmonized. The strategy was simple yet seemingly foolproof: every tune was a study in variation and every player got right to the point. Surely that's one mark of a fine bandleader.

- David R. Adler



Photo by Alan Nahigian

Eric Reed @ Dizzy's Club

Guitarist **Julian Lage** normally leads a small ensemble with cello and percussion, but the first of his two appearances at The Stone (Jun. 10th) featured a pared-down unit with just Jorge Roeder on upright bass and Dan Blake on tenor and soprano saxes. Lage was lightly amplified with a dry and woody timbre - a modest sound that contrasted with the furious pace of his ideas. The set began in a folkish vein with the pastoral "Woodside Waltz" and the brighter "Up From the North", both of which made clear that Blake and Roeder would be equally spotlighted and kept on their toes by the jaw-dropping leader. There were two explicitly jazzy pieces, the dissonant "Raven" and the effortlessly melodic (and provisionally titled) "Fake Standard", each introduced with snappy rhythm guitar. There were also nods to country and bluegrass with the Merle Travis-inspired "In and Around" and the scorching finale "Greylighting". Whether caressing a pure and simple line or taking on a treacherous unison passage, Blake and Lage phrased together as one and brought grit and edge to the most tuneful environments. It's not new to hear chops on the guitar, but articulation as novel and dynamically varied as Lage's is rare - his improvised counterpoint and cross-register leaps on "233 Butler", the dark and intricate opener to his latest disc *Gladwell* (Emarcy), were almost too fast and complex to take in. It seemed well beyond what he could do even a year ago. And yet music, not mere flash, was the result.

(DA)

The eclectic trio **Iron Dog** set a strange stage at The Local 269 (Jun. 10th), transplanting *Tonight Let's All Make Love in London* onto to the Lower East Side. Waves and drones and only-implied-yet-shifting tempos were piloted by quick rhythms from Andrew Drury's drums and grounded by Stuart Popejoy's electric bass and synthesizer, sounding at first like a game of "hide the violin" until waves ebbed and Sarah Bernstein's small but amplified bowing and scratches arose from the morass. As the sonic onslaught recessed, Popejoy began to play delicate figures with his bass capoed at about half-neck while Bernstein read a reverby and seemingly science-fictiony text. Their extended sonic experimentalism brought to mind early Pink Floyd psych-outs, mellowed a bit by the violin but still more free-ranging than their 2010 self-released disc *Field Recordings 1*. The disparate parts were delivered with intention and would perhaps have been received with greater comprehension had the PA allowed for a little vocal clarity. "Without a voice, how can you help but not endure," Bernstein tellingly said, or seemed to anyway, through the unaccommodating speakers. In any event, their efforts were largely lost on a gathering late-night crowd noisily arriving for the 11 pm rock set, at least until Marco Cappelli joined them for their final song. With the added guitar they pulled out a rollicking version of "Secret Agent Man" that caught the room's attention but with just enough breakdown to keep them uncomfortable.

- Kurt Gottschalk



Photo by Lena Adashvaya

Iron Dog @ The Local 269

Drummer **Dan Weiss** wears a curious lot of influences on his sleeve. Appearing with his trio at Cornelia Street Café (Jun. 10th), those inspirations included Tin Pan Alley, Swedish heavy metal and Polish piano music of the Romantic era. The set marked the first concert for the trio - with pianist Jacob Sacks and bassist Thomas Morgan - in over a year but they played with a synchronicity that belied any passage of time. The set's opener, "Ode to Messhugah", set two interwoven piano lines against an insistent single chord repetition, with the two motifs breaking apart and being variously interspersed. The 4/4 chord phrase was about the only thing that suggested the metal god dedicatees, at least until the tempo began to surge, a situation admirably navigated by Sacks. The unlikely followup, "It's Alright With Me", was like a strange change from major to minor. The song allowed more melody from the piano and while Weiss switched to brushes he was just as busily precise. They pushed it beyond song form but never lost the Cole Porter lilt. Weiss' "Frédéric" nicely reimagined a Chopin prelude as a jazzy interlude. Weiss offset his customary complexities in his solos, the first making quick mathematics of the hi-hat while the second devoted a similarly unequivocal attention to the bass drum. His penchant for intertwined piano and drum lines (nicely underscored by a Sacks contribution with strong unison melodies) was curiously reinforced by Morgan's lofty yet steadfast bass, like an anchor in mid-air.

(KG)

Most often sets of free improvised music are thought of as a single entity, with one narrative arc and peaks and valleys born of varying momentum. This thinking is perhaps too narrow. On surface listen, the duo of saxist **Mikko Innanen** and drummer **Andrew Cyrille** at I-Beam (Jun. 2nd) had a difficult task ahead of them for their first live meeting. At this point, this format offers little inherent surprise. Would the pair opt for full-on energy music, sparse ramblings or some combination of both? The hour-long set began tentatively, each player circling the other, Innanen overtly melodic on alto sax. Then the proceedings became denser, Cyrille echoing Innanen's line while remaining primarily rhythmic. Later Innanen would switch to baritone for a bit of balladry, then move into furious overblowing. During the course of the nearly hour-long set, Innanen would return to alto and baritone, as well as playing Indian wood clarinet, an Irish Uilleann Chanter, ocarina and supplementary percussion. Several missed natural stopping points instead became solo features, necessitating a subsequent change in feel (and usually instrument for Innanen), such that a rambling, disjointed aesthetic took hold. But then a new interpretation came to mind, one not too farfetched with a thoughtful musician like Innanen. This was not a single piece, but a series of spontaneous ones, linked by the solos, programmatic by happenstance, if not specific design, appreciated for its components, rather than overall. - **Andrey Henkin**

Peter Gannushkin/DOWNTOWNMUSIC.NET



Mikko Innanen/Andrew Cyrille @ I-Beam

There is something comforting about a 'standard' jazz set. It's good for the digestion, which must be why jazz clubs serve dinner. But there is a drawback. The monotony of form - head, horn solos, piano lead, maybe a bass and/or drum solo, brief group improv into head out - can render a listener somewhat unresponsive to the quality of the actual playing. This was the case with **Charles McPherson's** quintet set at Jazz Standard (Jun. 7th). The alto saxophonist worked with that iconoclast of iconoclasts Charles Mingus for over a decade yet little of that adventurous spirit was audible, at least in the structure of the pieces. But that aesthetic quibble aside, McPherson is an exciting, unique player, with uncommon vocabulary and ability to move easily between delicacy, speedy articulation and stridency. His band was no slouch either with bugle-y trumpeter Brian Lynch, pianist Jeb Patton (whose internship with the Heath Brothers has served him well) and the fervent rhythm section of non-brothers Ray and Billy Drummond. The set was a long one (80 minutes, so in that respect it varied from traditional jazz club fare) and included some blowing-vehicle-type standards like Rodgers-Hart's "Lover", Gus Arnheim's "Sweet and Lovely" and, interestingly, Sonny Rollins' "Tenor Madness". But most of the excitement of the set came up front in the form of two McPherson originals: the Prestige-Golden-Era-sounding "The Journey" and vaguely Biblical (Old Testament) "Song of the Sphinx". (AH)

The wildly creative drumming of **Jeff Ballard** took center stage at the innovative new Brooklyn venue ShapeShifter Lab (Jun. 4th) in a performance guided by his sweeping rhythmic and tonal prowess. Leading an international trio of Beninese guitarist **Lionel Loueke** and Puerto Rican alto saxophonist **Miguel Zenón**, the drummer steered the music through two sets of wide-ranging music reflecting his worldly experience. Opening with a vibrating percussive introduction, its ambient atmospherics reinforced by Loueke's reverberating tones, Ballard steered the music into earthier ground with his sprawling drumming as Zenón entered to engage in a rocking dialogue with Loueke on rock band Queens Of The Stone Age's "Hanging Tree". Ballard then sensitively navigated the sounds through the more exotic terrain of Loueke's "Virgin Forest" and Zenón's lyrical reading of "The Man I Love", before powerfully ending with a rousing rendition of his own "Beat Street". The second set found the group similarly exploring its one-world musical perspective, opening with a squawking naturalist "Bird Melody" that flowed flawlessly into the Eric Dolphy *Out To Lunch* classic "Gazzelloni", followed by Loueke's infectiously rhythmic "Vivi" and the Spanish-tinged "Gaita". Closing with Ballard swinging straightahead on Monk's "We See" the inventive super trio showed itself to be one the finest units in jazz today - preserving the music's tradition while taking it to intriguing new places. - **Russ Musto**



Lionel Loueke/Jeff Ballard/Miguel Zenón @ ShapeShifter Lab

A powerful multimedia project exploring the issues of race and gender in America, *Slow Fade To Black*, a collaborative effort wedding the music of **Geri Allen** and the visual imagery of Carrie Mae Weems, had its world premiere at the Prospect Park Bandshell (Jun. 14th). A Celebrate Brooklyn event involving over a dozen musicians and singers under the direction of Allen, the program opened with a solemn a cappella reading of the Negro spiritual "Oh Freedom" by the Howard University Vocal Jazz Ensemble Afro Blue. A duo drum interlude by Kassa Overall and Rodney Green introduced the instrumental music, with DJ Val's sampled voices of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Angela Davis buttressing the building drama, bassist Kenny Davis joining Allen and the growing group for a celebratory reprise of the opening song. Allen's piano took the spotlight on "Swamini", her tribute to Alice Coltrane, then Afro Blue joined the band for a medley ending with "Babe's Blues", a dedication to Betty Carter. The sampled voices and projected images of young black girls served as a backdrop for the tap dancing of Maurice Chestnut and drumming of Terri Lyne Carrington. The excitement grew with vocalist Lizz Wright's set, climaxing with "Grandma's Hand's" and "Open Your Eyes". The revolving cast, also including bassist Esperanza Spalding and guitarist Marvin Sewell, continued to celebrate the AfroAmerican musical diaspora in the second act, ending joyously with "Dancing In The Streets". (RM)

WHAT'S NEWS

In celebration of the birthday of John Coltrane this September, the group **Electric Ascension** will be performing at this year's Guelph Festival. In order to raise funds to have the concert filmed professionally in high-definition for future release and promulgation, a Kickstarter campaign has been initiated. For more information, visit rova.org.

In a surprising turnaround, the **Grammy Awards**, after vehement protests, have reinstated the Latin Jazz category for the next edition in February 2013. For more information, visit grammy.com.

Bassist **Ben Allison**, in his role as governor of the New York chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, recently testified before the US House of Representative's Committee on Energy and Commerce on the subject of domestic royalty payments to artists for commercial radio play. Currently, radio stations only pay music songwriters and music publishers rather than performers and record labels but a recent agreement between Clear Channel and label Big Machine may change this policy across the industry going forward.

There are rumblings that the annual **Moers Festival** of Germany, which just completed its 41st edition at the end of May (see review on pg. 13), may lose its funding as part of a municipal austerity campaign. No decisions have been made but a position paper by the city government has identified a number of possible areas of cost-saving, including the over €500,000 the festival currently receives.

The **Apollo Theater** of Harlem and **Louis Armstrong House** and **Flushing Town Hall**, both of Queens, all received \$150,000 grants as part of the American Express Partners in Preservation Program, intended to support preservation of historic buildings in the five boroughs of New York City. For more information, visit partnersinpreservation.com.

Klezmer clarinetist **Andy Statman** was among the class of 2012 NEA National Heritage Fellowship recipients, an award of \$25,000 given to innovators within traditional forms. For more information, visit nea.gov.

An agreement has tentatively been reached between musicians supported by union Local 802 and **University of the Streets**, ending a long standoff following an allegedly violent incident between an employee and one of the performers last fall. In exchange for changing various venue policies, the effective boycott of the club would be rescinded. Any musicians who have performed at the club in the last two years are encouraged to vote on the proposal by emailing sgasteyer@local802afm.org.

The winners of the 2012 **Jazz Journalists Association** annual awards were announced at an event held at Blue Note Jazz Club last month. For a complete list, visit jjazzawards.org.

WGBH, the public broadcasting radio station for Boston and the surrounding area, has announced a scaling-back of its jazz programming, moving "Jazz on WGBH With Eric Jackson" strictly to weekends and cancelling Steve Schwartz's Friday show. For more information, visit wgbh.org.

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