

Feature

New in the KUCI Jazz Library

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Vinnie Sperrazza - Juxtaposition - (Positone)

Drummer/composer Sperrazza's tunes feel comfortable in their own skins. Smart but not nerdy, charming, but not ingratiating, subtle and yet deeply substantive. This release of all originals graciously played by Sperrazza, the wondrous Bruce Barth on piano, bassist (and fine composer Peter Brendler- "Outside the Line", "Message in Motion" both Positone), and the special interstitial commentary of Chris Speed on tenor sax can channel Monk or Mingus, but stands alone in that special place where wit and wisdom collide.

Art Hirahara - Central Line - (Positone)

Pianist/composer Hirahara draws from multiple traditions, from the classical to Japanese folk tunes, to jazz balladry and bop. What remains consistent is his high level of thoughtfulness and sensitivity. The arrangements and phrasing are precisely appropriate. The ensemble play of the musicians on this release shines. For the record, they are Donny McCaslin, sax, Linda Oh, bass, and Rudy Royston, drums. Some recordings are deeply satisfying, and I know I will listen to them again and again over the years. This is one of those.

Brian Dickinson Quintet - The Rhythm Method - (Addo Records)

Canadian Composer/pianist Dickinson gets right to the heart of the music. With melodies that are poetic in their efficiency, and playing music delicately accented in earnestness and directness Dickinson pays homage to jazz innovators like Lennie Tristano and Wayne Shorter but does not mimic them. Really fine.

Frank Kohl Quartet - Rising Tide - (Pony Boy Records)

Cool jazz from this guitarist that swings or meditates. What I heard was an almost percussive precision on the way he attacks single note runs, the sparing and subtle use of decay and note bending, and the joy underlying his play... sort of like Charlie Byrd.

Ben Plotnick - Greenland - (Self Released)

Also from Canada comes Plotnick and his fiddle based swing record that sounds like a Django Reinhardt Bob Wills Jimmy Martin mashup string band. These are all originals except for a cover of "Red Wing". Fun to listen to, probably fun to dance to after a few beers as well. I don't know for sure since I haven't tried yet.

The Fat Babies - Solid Gassuh - (Delmark)

Old time Chicago jazz from Chicago is The Fat Babies gig. They even make their recordings sound old (solos sound like they were recorded in the hallway outside the studio). If I told you that you were listening to an old Smithsonian folkways recording, you'd be convinced. These tunes are trapped in amber. Listen to the original Louis Armstrong Hot Five recordings or vibrant improvisations and variations on the theme by The Preservation Hall Jazz Band for freshness. Still, this is a fine tribute to the origins of jazz. This is definitely one from the time capsule as opposed to one for the time capsule.

Alma Matters - Alma Matters - (Self Released)

The Alma Mater referred to in the punny name of the record and group of players and singers refers to Berkeley High School. The musicians and singers here are Bay Area professionals with a common educational experience. Often light and breezy these songs mainly written by Jeff Weinmann, Peter Apfelbaum and Natalie and Sandy Cressman, are the quintessence of pop jazz. Check out "Shadow Woman", "Use it All" and the lovely arrangement of Erik Jekabson's tune "Gospel Sermon".

