

Yvonnick Prené (SteepleChase Lookout)
by Alex Henderson

Although the harmonica is hardly a prominent instrument in jazz, Europe has given us some talented jazz practitioners over the years (including Germany's Hendrik Meurkens, Netherlands-born Max Geldray, Switzerland's Grégoire Maret, France's Sébastien Charlier and, of course, Belgium native Toots Thielemans). A good name to add to that list is Paris-born Yvonnick Prené, who makes his recording debut as a leader with *Jour de Fête*. Prené (who now lives in Brooklyn) is quite lyrical on introspective performances of Jerome Kern's "Nobody Else But Me" and the Jay Livingston-Ray Evans standard "Never Let Me Go" as well as on melodic postbop originals such as "Home", "As Night Falls" and "Thais". Ballads and slower grooves are one of Prené's strong points, but even when he embraces a fast tempo on "Obsessions" and John Coltrane's "Satellite", his harmonica playing has an ethereal quality. And Prené's sidemen - Michael Valeanu or Isaac Darche (guitar), Javi Santiago (piano), Or Bareket or Phil Donkin (bass) and Jesse Simpson (drums) - help him maintain that melodic atmosphere.

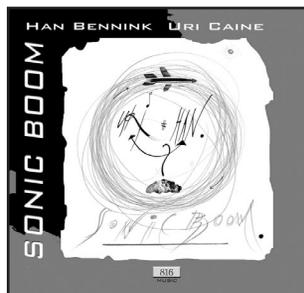
Prené obviously shares Thielemans' fondness for Brazilian music; "Escale" and the title track (both

Prené originals) have a strong Brazilian influence, as does a gentle performance of Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma". That standard has often been heard as AfroCuban jazz, but Prené demonstrates that it can work just as well in a Brazilian context.

One of the CD's most intriguing selections is the dreamy "A Billion Stars", which incorporates soundbites of the late science fiction writer Ray Bradbury (who passed away in 2012 at the age of 91). Samples, as a rule, are something one is more likely to encounter in hip-hop, electronica or industrial rock than in straight-ahead jazz, which usually thrives on improvisation and real-time performances. But Bradbury's overdubbed voice works well with Prené's postbop melody.

Jour de Fête is a consistently promising debut album from this young French improviser.

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk. Prené is at *Somethin' Jazz Club Jun. 2nd*. See Calendar.



Sonic Boom
Uri Caine/Han Bennink (816 Music)
by Fred Bouchard

Boom, indeed! Two oft-matched masters of playful percussion meet, greet and get indiscreet from the get-go. Han Bennink, crew-cut drummer dude of Holland, is on home turf at Bimhuis, Amsterdam's archetypal jazz joint; Uri Caine, Philadelphia pianist and impresario, was his guest on Apr. 12th, 2010. (Bimhuis' remarkable online roster history shows Caine to have played the club 15 times since 1994 in his own bands or in Dave Douglas' quintet; his previous meeting with Bennink there was as one of six pianists!)

A blow-by-blow follows these two in unbridled improvisation. After a warm-up feel-out in quicktime, Caine essays slow-burn balladry ("Grind of Blue") that Bennink soon kicks up a few notches. With nary a break, Caine rolls into a jittery two-beat blue "Hobo" that Bennink picks up with a parade beat on snare; as both turn to Latin, the drum solo diminishes to tricky sticks and rims and Caine's out-chorus gets lock-hand mania in Red Garland stop-time. The pianist sneaks "Round Midnight" in the back door and Bennink puts a lock on it as they scatter Monk references with exuberant abandon in microbursts of stride and free time amid cantilevered rumblings.

"As I Was" finds Caine still quietly toying with shards of "Midnight" as wisps of "If I Loved You" and other Tin Pan Alley love tunes waft through his fingers, but soon he perks up a jaunty two-beat theme; Bennink bashes it with glee and they both drive it home, twice, with a go-limp coda. By now a feel-good pattern emerges: the pianist ruminates up and down; his passages soon crest alongside droll drum rolls and skittering asides; then both stride forth boldly arms akimbo. All usual points of references, tonal and rhythmic, are atomized in the manic fray, but swing-to-bop finales generally rule. On the closer "Lockdown", the two open with hammering staccatos but shortly amble into easy-going stride and accelerate into ball-out 4/4 swing. They even trade 3s and 4s to carve a traditional finial on their twisty, angular flagpole. Bennink's Steinberg-like calligraphic variations on "Han/Uri" adorn the cover in aptly eccentric curlicues.

For more information, visit hanbennink.com. Caine is at *Birdland Jun. 4th-5th*. See Calendar.

UNEARTHED GEM



Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series, Vol. 31 / 29 / 30
Miles Davis Quintet/Stan Getz Quartet/
Oscar Peterson Trio
(TCB)

by Duck Baker

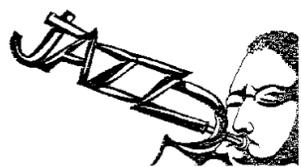
These three CDs were all recorded at the same concert, in Zurich on Apr. 8th, 1960. The concert was part of a Jazz at the Philharmonic-sponsored tour on which a Miles Davis Quintet, Stan Getz Quartet and Oscar Peterson Trio of the time shared billing. Getz used Peterson's rhythm tandem of Ray Brown and Ed Thigpen and brought along Jan Johansson, the excellent Swedish pianist with whom he worked fairly regularly during this period. And Davis came with John Coltrane, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb.

Some would argue, on the strength of the half-dozen records that document the group's performances on this short tour, that this represents another of Davis' "great quintets" and certainly Coltrane fans will find a great deal to savor here, closer in style to what he would soon do on his own than to earlier work with Miles. Supposedly he was put out at having to accept the work as a sideman at this point, though the sometimes-expressed idea that all the energy he pours into his improvisations is just a matter of venting his frustration seems thin. Miles himself certainly seems to be in good spirits, as he shows when he bases an entire chorus of "All Blues" on a quote from "The Blue Danube" (it is "ALL Blues", after all...).

Getz is in marvelous form and this rhythm section certainly works together beautifully despite it being an ad hoc group. Because he made it all sound so effortless, some might not appreciate what a daring improviser Getz could be when he was engaged. And he certainly was on this occasion, setting up challenges of all sorts for himself right from the get-go, when he introduces the opening "Gone With the Wind" with an unaccompanied cadenza, then sets up the second chorus of his solo as a series of unaccompanied breaks. His gorgeous tone, melodic inventiveness, great swing and impish sense of humor are on full display throughout this outstanding set.

Peterson must have been aware of uncomplimentary things Miles said about him in print shortly before this tour and his inclusion of "The Maid of Cadiz", which Davis had recorded on *Miles Ahead*, may well have been in response to the charge that he didn't play with feeling. We also note that the program is weighted towards modern jazz tunes, with only one standard included (the seldom heard "Politics and Poker"). It's nice to hear Peterson salute Duke Jordan ("Jordu") and Ray Bryant ("Cubano Chant") as well as Diz and Brownie ("Con Alma" and "Daahoud"), and Brown and Thigpen really shine. We do not know whether Davis was impressed but it's a safe bet that Peterson fans will be happy.

For more information, visit tcb.ch. The Miles Davis Festival is at *Smoke* throughout June. See Calendar.



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