

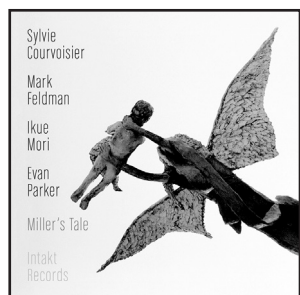
Ananda: The World Is Bliss
Christian Finger (Strikezone)
 by Elliott Simon

Ananda: The World Is Bliss from drummer Christian Finger begins with “African Skies, Linear Lives”, tight jazz/rock underscored by Pete McCann’s searing guitar and a calming piano solo from Vadim Neselovskyi. Finger then adds guitarist Dave Stryker to the mix for “Truth Waltzed In”, a laid-back bluesy foray. A changing landscape motivates this session and while it detracts from cohesion, each tune is a complete package.

Violinist Zach Brock is integral and his command and touch enables him to soothe or spit fire. The Mivos String Quartet is also sprinkled throughout and performs without added instrumentation on the Eastern European-informed “Interlude” and classically-driven “Not Gone, Not Forgotten”. The gorgeous title cut has Brock in the lead while “Nights Beyond India” is an exquisite symphonic study in difference, McCann returning to the opener’s fusion. Vocalist Bobby Harden tries too hard to find the pathos in “Two Faces” but “For Now” skillfully tours through tight spritely bop with trading guitars and quick-stepping violin.

This doesn’t prepare for the expansiveness of the two-part “Secret Procession”. Its imagery and powerful textural, melodic and harmonic aesthetic make it the session’s masterwork. An overly extended drumming duet with Jeff Ballard cleanses the palate, making the two-part “In’s Weltenall” all the more delightful. A commanding and full sounding trio exploration, “Part 1: Into the Sky” sets the course and describes the journey while the string quartet realizes the outcome on “Part 2: Endless Stars”. Given the project’s ambitious nature it is not surprising that there is a lot to digest on *Ananda: The World Is Bliss*.

For more information, visit christianfinger.com. Finger is at *Ryan’s Daughter* Aug. 25th with Gene Bertoncini and *Club Bonafide* Aug. 28th. See *Calendar and Regular Engagements*.



Miller’s Tale
**Sylvie Courvoisier/Mark Feldman/
 Ikue Mori/Evan Parker (Intakt)**
 by John Sharpe

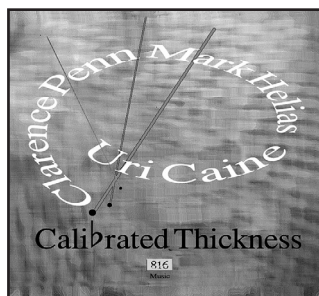
A series of residencies at The Stone has headlined iconoclastic English saxophonist Evan Parker with a galaxy of NYC-based improvisers. One of Parker’s finest discs (*Either Or And*, Relative Pitch, 2013) documented his duo with one such player, pianist Sylvie Courvoisier, and for *Miller’s Tale* the pair are joined by the violin of Mark Feldman and the electronics of Ikue Mori. With such an experienced crew, it’s no surprise that the unscripted interplay is both surefooted and focused, yet also unpredictable. Four group pieces precede five duets exploring every combination, excepting Courvoisier and husband Feldman.

To chart the dialogue of the quartet cuts would be impossible, due to both the sheer variety of sounds

and their placement. Parker gains greater prominence in duets with each of the other participants, his emphatic reunion with Courvoisier compelling in particular. Parker wears his prowess lightly, as his streams of circular breathed notes, such as the spiraling soprano rollercoaster on “Up from Paradise”, might pass unremarked, were it not for their rightness. In that he’s well matched; Courvoisier works her entire instrument, rattling, rippling and responsive.

What rhythm there is comes when she digs into insistent patterns, as on the extended “The American Dream”. In such interactions the accomplished transitions between episodes are especially noteworthy. Just listen to how Feldman steps into the breach for an aching soliloquy when the ensemble drops away later in the same track. Feldman brings a classical purity of tone, which slices straight through the tensely dashing “Death of a Salesman”. By contrast, Mori’s insectoid hums swirl around the edges, lending an air of mystery, most noticeable on both her fragmented exchange with Feldman on “Riding on a Smile and a Shoeshine” but also her valedictory encounter with Courvoisier on the final “A Fountain Pen”.

For more information, visit intaktrec.ch. Courvoisier and Feldman are at *Village Vanguard* Aug. 12th and *Cornelia Street Café* Aug. 20th. See *Calendar*.



Calibrated Thickness
Uri Caine (816Music)
 by Mark Keresman

Pianist Uri Caine’s resumé of excellent eclecticism rivals that of his peers/collaborators Dave Douglas and John Zorn: solos; duos; trios; orchestral work; straightahead jazz based in Tin Pan Alley; klezmer; and interpretations of classical composers like Mahler, Mozart and Wagner. *Calibrated Thickness* is a trio set with bassist Mark Helias and drummer Clarence Penn, joined on a few tracks by cornet player Kirk Knuffke. It’s a bracing assemblage in the nominally straightahead category (if categories you must have), albeit with plenty of variety and curve balls.

Opener “Manahatta” tears out of the gate, Caine playing in slightly percussive, brisk batch-of-clusters manner, Helias and Penn kicking up a swirling, joyous onslaught of swing. “Icicles” leans toward free jazz to a degree; there is no theme in the traditional sense yet plenty of slightly abstract lyricism, plus drama and forward motion.

Without being overt about it, “Night Wrestler” and “Scatterbrain Suite” recall the soul/R&B-accented styles of Les McCann and Gene Harris, not so much with the rhythmic context but rather with Caine placing funky notes just so amid his hardbop extrapolations and punchy modern clusters. The forceful, weaving “Hidden Glances” features bristling cornet and inside/outside dynamics. Rhapsodic and melancholy “He Said She” finds Caine letting the European classical side of his palette color the picture.

While there are indeed many fine piano trio albums in the marketplace, *Calibrated Thickness* has the selling points of concision, gripping sense of urgency and variety of engaging moods, sometimes within the same piece. While Caine is indeed an eclectic sort, all the assorted influences are well-woven into his approach.

For more information, visit uricaine.com. This project is at *Smalls* Aug. 29th. See *Calendar*.



Presented by The Side Door Jazz Club
Black Art Jazz Collective (Sunnyside)
 by Joel Roberts

This collective sextet brings together an allstar lineup of rising postbop stars (saxophonist Wayne Escoffery, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, trombonist James Burton III, pianist Xavier Davis, bassist Vicente Archer and drummer Johnathan Blake) in a group with a political, as well as a musical purpose. It’s a generational statement of sorts, as the band is composed of likeminded artists of a similar age, mostly in their early 40s, who graduated from major Northeast music programs and jumped into the New York scene at approximately the same time. All are established leaders in their own right and have played key sideman roles with the likes of Tom Harrell, Bobby Hutcherson, Wayne Shorter and Ron Carter, among many others.

Recorded at Connecticut’s Side Door Jazz Club, the album features all original compositions, many of which were inspired by black cultural and political heroes. The opener, Escoffery’s spirited “Double Consciousness”, for example, was inspired by Civil Rights pioneer W.E.B. Dubois and features some furious back-and-forth solos from Pelt and Escoffery, easily two of the most explosive players around. Two different tunes were inspired by Barack Obama, highlighting, perhaps, two sides of the nation’s first black president. Escoffery’s “Awaiting Change” has a hard-charging urgency and sense of hopefulness while Davis’ “No Small Change” is more plaintive and introspective. Burton’s “Going Somewhere”, meanwhile, is a powerful, reverential tribute to the abolitionist Sojourner Truth, with some brilliant work from the trombonist.

The album is dedicated to the late bassist and group co-founder Dwayne Burno, who is also remembered with a fiery take on his tune “Devil Eyes”, a vigorous workout for Davis and Blake. The closing number, Blake’s “The Shadower”, the album’s longest at more than 12 minutes, is a swirling, serpentine homage to saxophone icon Joe Henderson, with still more exhilarating solos from the dynamic duo of Pelt and Escoffery.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com. This project is at *Jazz Standard* Aug. 17th. See *Calendar*.

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT PRESENTS

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VICTOR GOULD / CLOCKWORK

WITH JEREMY PELT, GODWIN LOUIS, MYRON WALDEN, BEN WILLIAMS, E.J. STRICKLAND, PEDRITO MARTINEZ

“It’s the combination of elements in Gould’s music — the hard-bop drive and harmonic adventure, the chamber-music refinement, the Latin tinge that Jelly Roll Morton theorized all those years ago — that makes *Clockwork* succeed on the level that it does.”

—David R. Adler
 New York, March 2016
Jazz Times

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