

Ari Hoenig

one-time Roy Hargrove bassist Boller fill their roles in the Heonig hurly-burly with intelligence and good taste. All six tracks will not only hold your attention, but will get you as involved in the time-shifting arrangements as the musicians themselves. The recorded sound is superb. **Tony Hall**

Human Element

Abstract Logix | ★★★★★

Scott Kinsey (kys), Matthew Garrison (cl b), Arto Tunçboyacıyan (v, perc), Gary Novak (d) and John McLaughlin (g). Rec. 2010

Late great keyboardist and sonic innovator Joe Zawinul's groove fuelled, pan-global blueprint, established via Weather Report then his long running Syndicate band, is often copied but rarely bettered. Unsurprising really due to the ever morphing yet high powered line ups of both groups, not least with their succession of emerging bassists and drummers that included the likes of Miroslav Vitous, Jaco, Victor Bailey, Linley Marthe, Richard Bona and Matthew Garrison, alongside percussion greats Chester Thompson, Peter Erskine and Aierto Moreira. Thus Human Element have legit links to Zawinul's illustrious lineage with both Garrison and their multi-talented singer/percussionist Arto Tunçboyacıyan both serving as young charges among the Syndicate's 1990s line ups. Yet it's Tribal Tech keyboardist Scott Kinsey's uncannily authentic take on Joe's malleable, vocalised, shapeshifting synth sounds that adds poignant and pungent top lines here. However this is not some mawkish nostalgia trip but a forward leap into thumping world funk via drum and bass beats and angular harmonic shifts, creating a welcoming non-denominational vibe that could sound as at home in New York as it could in New Delhi. Turkish-Armenian-born Tunçboyacıyan's voice binds this hybrid sound world, adding an accessible entry point and a broader appeal beyond fusion geekdom while fiery bass work from Garrison, crackling drums from Novak and a guest spot from guitar guru McLaughlin on 'Hi Loa' all add some technical fizz. Overall though Human Element is a world party of sound, song and rhythmic joy Joe himself would be proud of. **Mike Flynn**

The Impossible Gentlemen

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Basho Records SRCD 36-2 | ★★★★★

Gwilym Simcock (p), Mike Walker (g), Steve Swallow (b) and Adam Nussbaum (d). Rec. 2010

While this group opens a new chapter in the stylistic evolution of Gwilym

Simcock by placing him alongside the rhythm team of Swallow and Nussbaum whose collective approach to the groove is perhaps more unequivocal to anything he has previously regularly worked with, it should not overshadow the contribution of bandleader Mike Walker, whose musical achievements have tended to be somewhat overlooked by a London-centric jazz scene. His playing on 'Laugh Lines,' his own complex yet dancing theme, is handled with easy precision and balance and his solo – as they are throughout this album – are models of logic and concision. Like the finest sportsmen in the beautiful game, he always seems to have the time and time to achieve his ends. Swallow and Nussbaum are exemplary throughout, a pairing that came together in the late-1970s and have taken delight in seeking out each other's musical company ever since. They set the bar high for their two English bandmates, who respond with some of their most inspired playing on record. With tour dates stretching into 2012, there is already talk of another album, which will be eagerly anticipated. Meanwhile this downpayment makes this one of the most refreshing debut albums for a long time. **Stuart Nicholson**

Jæ

Balls and Kittens, Draught and Strangling Rain

Hubro CD2508 | ★★★★★

Jessica Sligter (voc, g, melodica, p, fl, recorder, whistling), Jan Martin Smørudal (voc, g, bells), Daniel Meyer Grønvoid (voc, ukelele), Kyrre Laastad (d, perc, tambourine), Eivind Lønning (t), Martin Taxt (tuba), Ole Henrik Moe (violin, strings, saw), Karl Rønnekleiv (strings), Juhani Silvola (b, mandolin), Andreas Löwe (p, harmonium), Andreas Lemmo Knudsen (perc), Espen Reinertsen (ts, fl), Viljam Nybacka (g), Jo Berger Myrhe (b, autoharp), Håvard Skaset (g). Rec. date not given

Dutch-born Oslo-resident Jessica Sligter has previously been involved with a project called *The Story of Modern Farming*, a collaborative initiative in which she and other musicians navigate bridges between free improv and indie-pop. This solo effort leans more closely towards the pop, highlighting her skills as a singer-songwriter and foregrounding a quirky delicacy that might appeal to fans of Susanna and the Magical Orchestra or Hanne Hukkelberg. At its cutest, it comes perilously close to sounding like a TV advert for a mobile phone package, but there's more going on here than just floppy-haired acoustic cardigan-pop. Sligter's songs share some of the Old European charm of femme-folk singer Josephine Foster, at times haunted lullaby, at others operatic dreamscape. There's also a Scott Walker-like attention to detail in the production, embedding distant cries and dull knocks into the fabric of the songs in ways that catch the ear by surprise. It's a deceptively sophisticated suite of songs. **Daniel Spicer**

Goran Kajfes

XY

Headspin Recordings HEAD013 | ★★★★★

Goran Kajfes (t, perc, synth b), Suranjana Ghosh (tablas), Jonas Kulhammar (ts, fl, bs), Per "Ruskräsk" Johansson (barkit s, fl, bass drum), Jesper Nordenström (org, Fender

Rhodes, Logan String Melody), Robert Östlund (Moog, el g), Johan Berthling (ac b, el b), Johan Holmegård (d), Fredrik Björling (d), Lars Skoglund (d), Andreas Söderström (ac g, el g, key harp), Hanna Ekström (violin), Johan Lindström (el g, guz), Majid Bekkas (voc, oud) and David Osterberg (synth). Rec. date not given

Here's one for all those who insist they don't make 'em like they did in the 1960s/70s. On X (the first set in this double-disc UK debut) Croatian/Swedish trumpeter Kajfes digs deep into the sound and legacy of Don Cherry's hippified, commune-dwelling Swedish years, leading a large psych-jazz ensemble called The Subtropic Arkestra. You can practically smell the incense wafting off it: 'Solar Still' and 'Dinner with Inner' are tabla-dripping Indo-jazz; 'Subtropics' and 'Sarasvati' get into the kind of ethno-squelch-groove used on Cherry's *Brown Rice*; and 'Sand Boogie' is an irresistible nugget of oriental acid jazz that could have been recorded any time since 1967. Best of all, Kajfe's reworking of Cherry's 'Solidarity' evokes a sweeping vista worthy of Ennio Morricone. The second disc, Y, is a more minimal collection of duets with modular-synth boffin David Osterberg. Awash with grainy, tactile tweets and whooshes, a lot of it is deeply psychedelic, recalling not only Cherry's work with Terry Riley, but also German Kosmische bands like Popol Vuh and Tangerine Dream. Sure, it's all very nostalgic – derivative, even – but it's also great, joyful fun. **Daniel Spicer**

Steve Khan

Parting Shot

ESC Records ESC 3740-2 | ★★★★★

Steve Khan (g, v, guiro), Anthony Jackson (b), Dennis Chambers (d), Manolo Badrena (perc) (v), Marc Quinones, Bobby Allende (perc) with Rob Mounsey (ky) and Tatiana Parra, Andres Beuwsaert (v). Rec. November 2010

It's taken the best part of 40 years but Khan has finally got around to recording a full-on Latin influenced recording, and, by gum, it's worth the wait. What underwrites this splendid album is the choir of percussion that ebbs and flows beneath Khan's long, mellifluous guitar lines, be it on the 'Blues Connotation' which has him and Jackson doubling up lines with a contagious joy or on the samba inflected 'Bye Yah' (Monk meets Jobim, a deliriously daft mix). Of course it helps that Khan has long time pals Jackson and Chambers on board, allowing the music to flow with a hipsway swing. There are darker shades too, as on the Martino-like knottiness of 'Los Gaiteros' (nice cowbell!) or the blue meditation 'When She's Not There'. But it's that Latin vibe that enriches this welcome release, even on the inevitably Steely Dan-like groove of 'Influence Peddler.' **Andy Robson**

Carol Kidd And Nigel Clark

Tell Me Once Again

Linn AKD377 | ★★★★★

Carol Kidd (v) and Nigel Clark (g). Rec. 1-3 February 2010

Produced, engineered and mixed by Calum Malcolm, you could say that this highly anticipated duet album from vocalist Carol Kidd and guitarist Nigel Clark has been 20 years in the making. The decision to finally make this album – after two decades of music-making in an expanded quintet – was made after a show-stopping

performance at the 2009 Glasgow Jazz Festival of what has now become a new signature song for Kidd, 'Moon River', which forms the still centrepiece of *Tell Me Once Again*. Letting the lyrics and melodies work their magic in the most understated way possible, the duo finds the emotional heart of each song with unerring accuracy, from the heart-wrenching sentiments of 'I Loves You Porgy' to the sunny bossa of Stevie Wonder's 'Moon Blue' to the moving title track, co-written by the singer and guitarist. Signing off with the Edward C. Redding song, 'The End of a Love Affair' – sung by Billie Holiday, Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Julie London and others – the duo's hushed intimacy and nuanced interpretations linger long in the memory. **Peter Quinn**

Ryan Kisor Quintet

Live at Smalls

Smalls Live SL0001 | ★★★★★

Ryan Kisor (t), Sherman Irby (as), Peter Zak (p), Carlos Henriquez (b) and Ali Jackson (d). Rec. May 2008

On these two late May evenings at Smalls, LCOJ trumpeter Ryan Kisor took in a five-piece group of mainly Wynton Marsalis-associated musicians. Still only in his thirties, Kisor is already a young veteran, considering that he made two albums (for Columbia) before he'd even reached 21, though lately he's been a regular on Criss Cross. He has a personal sound, plays with much punch and energy and, as a leader, chops excellent material to blow on. The two best examples of this are Jay Jay Johnson's moving composition, 'Enigma' (which originated on one of the trombonist's 10" LPs for Blue Note) and Gillespie's poignant minor-key 'Con Alma', one of Dizzy's very best, which is also a challenge to those who take it on. Kisor's front-line partner is an excellent altoist who was with one of Roy Hargrove's earlier Quintets and who became one of the first jazzmen to put out product on their own label after a long-forgotten Blue Note date called *Big Mama's Biscuits!* Very much a Charlie Parker-influenced player, he makes the most of his opportunities here to really stretch out, coming up with logically constructed solos, always conscious of melody. The only disappointment, maybe, is the closing, relatively uneventful blues. **Tony Hall**

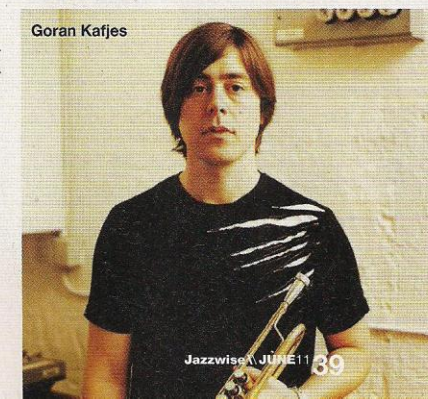
Konitz/Mehldau/Haden/Motian

Live At Birdland

ECM 2736987 | ★★★★★

Lee Konitz (as), Brad Mehldau (p), Charlie Haden (b) and Paul Motian (d). Rec. 9-10 December 2008.

A summit meeting or what? Six standards allowed to blossom and bear fruit delivered by a fabulous quartet



Goran Kajfes