

Vital Organs

Pat Bianchi, *Higher Standard* (21-H Records 001; 57:30 ★★★★★) The Rochester native and organist in Pat Martino's trio for the past four years brings a reverence for the old school, a masterful touch with grooving left-handed bass lines and a scorching right-hand technique to this set of jazz standards, Broadway show tunes and two originals. Accompanied by the swinging Philly-based guitarist Craig Ebner and veteran drummer Byron Landham (a longtime member of Joey DeFrancesco's group), Bianchi tears it up on "Without A Song," famously covered by Sonny Rollins on *The Bridge* (1962), and flaunts his Jimmy Smith-inspired burn on a relaxed medium-tempo rendition of Horace Silver's "Blue Silver," the latter featuring an outstanding solo from Ebner. The syncopated crew steps into a more modernist, Larry Young-ish zone on Bianchi's "The Will Of Landham," which again showcases the organist's incendiary right-hand runs. And they settle into a mellow accord on two songs associated with Bill Evans—Leonard Bernstein's poignant "Some Other Time" and the great pianist's gently swinging waltz, "Very Early"—both underscored by Landham's inimitable brushwork. Then it's back to the sheer burn factor on John Coltrane's "Satellite," Oscar Pettiford's "Bohemia After Dark" and Bianchi's own jaunty "Blues Minus One," the latter fueled by Landham's conversational, loosely swinging pulse. This is feel-good music delivered by three consummate pros on the organ group circuit.

Ordering info: patbianchi.com

Brian Charette, *Alphabet City* (Posi-Tone PR8140; 55:12 ★★½) An in-demand organist on the New York scene, Charette pushes the envelope in a few unconventional directions on his ninth release as a leader. Joined by guitarist Will Bernard and drummer Rudy Royston, the versatile crew incorporates James Brown-inspired funk ("They Left Fred Out"), unabashed fusion (the aptly named "Not A Purist") and Eastern European folk elements ("Hungarian Major") into the eclectic mix. "Sharpie Moustache" is a minor blues that falls somewhere between The Meters and Booker T & The MG's while the rock-ish "Disco Nap" turns Royston loose at the tag. "Avenue A" is a gentle ode to Charette's beloved East Village neighborhood and "Split Black" offers Bernard a chance to stretch out on a distortion-laced solo. And while the closer, "The Vague Reply," is perhaps the most conventional B-3 number here, it is clear that Charette wants to take the organ out of the jazz lounge and test-drive it down some very different roads with this ambitious release.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com

Alex Norris Organ Quartet, *Extension Deadline* (Brooklyn Jazz Underground 052; 50:25 ★★★★★½) Royston also makes an appearance on this exhilarating modernist outing led by trumpeter Alex Norris and featuring George Colligan on Hammond organ and Gary Thomas



Pat Bianchi

on tenor sax. Though Colligan is rarely heard in this kind of setting, he acquits himself nicely on urgently swinging tracks like the bristling closer, "Red Flag," and the incendiary title track, as well as on the relaxed, medium-tempo swinger "Night Watchman," which has Norris playing a beautiful flugelhorn solo and Thomas blowing in typically searching fashion on his robust tenor solo. Other highlights on this superb outing, which is fueled by Royston's crisply swinging, remarkably interactive touch on the kit, are the swaggering "San Jose," a mellow rendition of Bobby Hutcherson's gorgeous waltz "Little B's Poem" and Colligan's surging "Optimism." A stellar effort by an all-star crew that exudes a high level of intensity and a collective sense of burn from track to track.

Ordering info: bjurecords.com

Ray Anderson's Organic Quartet, *Being The Point* (Intuition 71313; 52:48 ★★½) Gary Versace is the organ foil to Ray Anderson's trombone on this spirited and highly unorthodox organ group offering that travels from upbeat calypso-meets-funk ("At Home in the Muddy Water") to mournful requiem ("Marching On—Blues For John Lewis") to bittersweet ballad ("Child's Eyes") to the compelling second line number "Instigations," which features Tommy Campbell stretching out on a melodic drum solo. Versace is turned loose to wail on the uptempo swinger "Hot Crab Pot," which is brimming with quirky, Cage-ian interludes, and also on the skronk-fueled title track, which carries a slightly sinister vibe. Versace also delivers a wistful, lyrical organ solo on the hauntingly beautiful "Realization." Anderson's love of the Hammond B-3 is as strong as the rest in this roundup, but his application of that hulking beast here is also wildly different than the others. **DB**

Ordering info: rayanderson.org



Makaya McCraven *In The Moment*

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM 0003

★★★★★

Fusion jazz, with its embrace of electricity and studio post-production, and free improvisation, which elevated spontaneous improvisation, arose at roughly the same time. While their commercial fortunes contrast strongly, they are united in the disparagement they've earned from certain corners of the jazz community. On *In The Moment*, they come together in a truce brokered by a third genre: hip-hop.

Mind you, Makaya McCraven probably isn't too worried about what you call the music on *In The Moment*. As befits a drummer whose CV includes stints with both Bobby Broom and Bernie Worrell, he's more concerned with making music that breathes and grows. McCraven assembled the album from live recordings made during an extended sojourn at the Bedford, a restaurant in Chicago's Wicker Park. Neither the membership of his band nor the material they played was fixed. Rather, whoever joined him improvised the music, constrained only by McCraven's strong preference for a clearly stated groove. McCraven and a sequence of bassists never betray that imperative, but they find within it plenty of room for exploration. He races ahead of the beat, elaborates upon it, briefly suspends it and reduces it to essentials, creating a framework capable of supporting complementary rhythms, spacy atmospheres and short, pungent melodies.

Though the music is improvised, it has also been diligently distilled, and sometimes enhanced by added loops. While eight additional players appear alongside McCraven on the record, there are never more than five at a time, and often only three. Vibraphonist Justin "Justefan" Thomas and guitarist Jeff Parker are McCraven's foils, adding both cloudy textures and acid tones. Each gets some licks in, but this is music is more about achieving and sustaining a collective vibe than making solo statements, and on that level it is quite successful.

—Bill Meyer

In The Moment: Exploration Intro; The Jaunt; Slightest Right; First Thing First; Lonely; Gnawa; On The Spot; Butterscotch; TomTom; Three Fifts A Man; In The Moment; Quartz; Just Stay Right There; Untitled; Requests; Time Travel; The Encore; The Drop; Finances. (73:42)

Personnel: Makaya McCraven, drums, beats, loops, overdubs; Matt Ulery, double bass, electric bass; Marquis Hill, trumpet; Junius Paul, double bass, electric bass; Justin "Justefan" Thomas, vibraphone; Jeff Parker, guitar; Joshua Abrams, double bass; De'Sean Jones, tenor saxophone; Tony Barba, tenor saxophone, electronics.

Ordering info: intlantem.bandcamp.com