

NEWVELLE

BY MARCIA HILLMAN

With all of the changes in the recording industry during the past few decades, it has been increasingly difficult for a record label to do business in the 'old fashioned way'. However, Newvelle Records—started by Elan Mehler (a pianist himself) and his partner Jean-Christophe Morisseau in Paris in 2014—is meeting the challenge with their unique format and marketing approach.

The label is truly an American-French collaboration, even to the name (an Americanized pun on *nouvelle*). Recording is done and mixed by Marc Urselli at East Side Sound in Manhattan, mastered by Alex DeTurk and pressed and printed at MPO outside of Paris. The sessions are issued only on vinyl and sold strictly on a membership basis. Six albums will be issued each year and the buyer will receive one album every two months. The musicians are paid up front and keep their rights to the music but grant Newvelle a few years where the music is available only at Newvelle and only on vinyl. After that, the rights revert to the artists, who can release the music in whatever format they choose. "We are building a musically and aesthetically uncompromising model devoted to high quality where a stable economic model is provided by a membership base allowing the art to be paramount," stated Mehler.

The first season's selections were albums by pianist Frank Kimbrough's quintet; drummer Jack DeJohnette playing solo piano (his original instrument); tenor

saxophonist Noah Preminger; the late pianist Don Friedman's trio [see review on pg. 34]; bassist Ben Allison's trio; and pianist Leo Genovese. The second season selections will be albums by bassist John Patitucci's trio; the duo of pianist Kevin Hays and guitarist Lionel Loueke; pianist Jon Cowherd; Aruán Ortiz playing solo piano; bassist Chris Tordini's trio; and bassist Rufus Reid's trio with the Sirius String Quartet.

The uniqueness of the label does not stop with the marketing approach. The packaging is in a class by itself as well. Instead of the traditional LP jacket with pictures of the artists on the covers and liner notes about the music and the musicians, buyers receive a complete art package. The jackets are gatefold so as to accommodate photos (not of the musicians) each season by a prominent photographer and the text written by a noted author, continuing the concept of French-American collaboration. Season One features images by renowned French photographer Bernard Plossu and text by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Tracy K. Smith. Season Two has pictures from the French photographic collective Tendance Floue and text by best-selling novelist Douglas Kennedy.

Newvelle's artist roster, explains Mehler, "is selected in lots of different ways. Don Friedman and Frank Kimbrough were teachers of mine at NYU. I reached Jack DeJohnette through his website. Other people I heard or knew at NYU. Becca Stevens used to sing in my band. Rufus Reid reached out to me. It's really where the wind takes me and a sound that hits home."

According to Reid, he had heard about Kimbrough's connection with the label and visited Newvelle's

website. "After checking it out, I became very interested in the way the label operated and wrote a letter to Elan. We then started talking about a project that I had wanted to do for a long time," continued Reid. "I had always wanted to record with strings. Elan said okay and now my album, which contains all original compositions by myself, features five tracks with the Sirius String Quartet." Reid states that he is "really excited about working with people who are truly global and world-class. The quality of the product is wonderful and Elan has been very generous."

Preminger is also happy about his relationship with Newvelle. "I know Elan from the Boston area where we both lived. Since Elan is a fellow musician, he knows all about the creative process and lets us have creative control." Preminger had always wanted to do a vinyl album of just ballads and Newvelle gave him the chance to do that. "The great thing about what Elan is doing," Preminger remarked, "is making a complete product of art that is incredibly fair to all the artists. He really understands how a musician deserves to be treated."

In keeping with Newvelle's art focus, Mehler waxed poetic about the label's mission by saying: "The kind of music we record is intimately linked with the way we record it. A sound that is elegant and uncluttered. The carefully chosen note more precious than the explosion of scales. Melody is king here. Simplicity and sophistication never drifting into intellectualization. Music that is designed instead of fussily constructed. The real sound of musicians playing in a space together rather than the post-production assemblage of disparate parts. Creating the freedom and the space to hear the finger on a bass string, the weight of a hand through

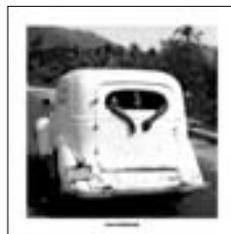
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 50)



Meantime
Frank Kimbrough



Return
Jack DeJohnette



Some Other Time
Noah Preminger



Strength and Sanity
Don Friedman



Quiet Revolution
Ben Allison

VOXNEWS

HOPING & DREAMING

BY SUZANNE LORGE

Jimmy Scott, who got his start singing with Lionel Hampton's band in the '40s-50s, may be the only countertenor in the history of vocal jazz. After Scott's initial success with Hampton, his career was hamstrung for decades, the casualty of legal wrangling over album releases. What a sorry loss for jazz listeners. Eden River Records and producer Ralf Kemper go a long way to remedy this loss with *I Go Back Home – A Story about Hoping and Dreaming*, Scott's final album, recorded in 2009, five years before Scott's death in 2014 at 88. His voice had settled into a wide vibrato and its timbre had thinned, but his elongated phrases, uncanny feel for time and deft back-phrasing remained as gripping as ever. Nobody sings like this.

On the album Scott recreates some of his better-known numbers like "Everybody's Somebody's Fool" (his only charting tune), "Motherless Child" and "If Ever I Lost You", each showcasing impressive visiting talent. Across the dozen tunes on the recording, Scott sings duets with vocalists Dee Dee Bridgewater, Monica Mancini, Joe Pesci and Renee Olstead and six of the tunes feature solos by instrumentalists Joey DeFrancesco (organ), Kenny Barron (piano), Arturo

Sandoval (trumpet), Till Brönner (trumpet) and the late James Moody (saxophone) and Oscar Castro-Neves (guitar). The collaborators' appreciation for Scott as an artist and person is palpable on each track and stands as a fitting tribute to the underappreciated singer. The album releases in the U.S. on Jan. 27th.

May 2016 was a big month for singer **Gregory Porter**. Not only did he launch *Take Me to the Alley* (Blue Note), which went on to garner a Grammy nomination this year, but he performed at the Philharmonie Berlin. The live recording and DVD of this concert, *Gregory Porter: Live in Berlin* (Eagle Rock), came out only a few months later. The concert recapped most of the signature tunes from Porter's three hugely successful albums—how thrilling it is to watch and hear Porter perform them live in the minimalist setting of a concert hall, his vibrant baritone ringing out like a church bell. In introducing "Take Me to the Alley" on the DVD, Porter says that the song is about "those places that need illumination, elevation...and the people that live there." He goes on to describe visiting those places with his mother to help minister to the needy. By the end of the first tune it's clear that Porter is still working to illuminate and elevate—he's just doing it in different alleys these days.

Singer **Kendra Shank** and pianist Geoffrey Keezer named their new CD, *Half Moon* (Ride Symbol), after the globe lamp suspended above the grand piano at the house concert that spawned this live recording. The

concert happened to be in the same apartment building where years before jazz legend Abbey Lincoln had given Shank the chart to "When Love Was You and Me", a tune that she had written with trumpeter Thad Jones. It appears on the album, along with other similarly evocative compositions that lend themselves to the duo's inspired improvisations. On "Life's Mosaic" or "Alone Together", for instance, Shank displays the imagination and expressiveness that earns her a spot alongside mentors Lincoln, Shirley Horn and Jay Clayton. The two will kick off the album at Mezzrow (Jan. 9th).

Singer **Rebecca Kilgore** will be performing in town this month, providing New Yorkers with several opportunities to hear the Oregon-based Songbook specialist. She plays both Midday Jazz Midtown at Saint Peters and Mezzrow (Jan. 18th), following this with a show at Metropolitan Room (Jan. 19th).

Kurt Elling will be touring with the Branford Marsalis Quartet during 2017 to promote *Upward Spiral* (Marsalis Music-OKeh), the first-time collaboration between the two jazz superstars. The tour comes to Jazz at Lincoln Center (Jan. 20th-21st), with two shows and a free pre-concert discussion each night. Next month, Elling/Marsalis and Porter will square off for Best Vocal Jazz Album at the Grammys in Los Angeles.

The tip of the Winter Jazzfest iceberg: singers **Amina Claudine Myers** and **Dee Dee Bridgewater/Theo Bleckmann/Alicia Olatuja** (Jan. 6th) and **Claudia Acuña** and **Becca Stevens** (Jan. 7th). ❖

(INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

for college." He looked at me and said, "Boy, you're in the best college you could be in right now." I didn't understand that at the time, it took me years to discover what he meant. I went to Manhattan School of Music for a few months, but I quit when we started playing some Thad Jones arrangements in the jazz band. At the school I was playing the second parts but at the Vanguard, I was playing the first parts. I was playing lead with Thad and Mel at that time. So I said to the band director, "I play lead with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra and here you have me playing second. Don't you think I should be playing first or lead?" He said, "I can't do that, he's a senior", talking about the guy playing lead. So that's when I left school. It's okay, because I wouldn't have had the opportunities to play with Count Basie and Duke Ellington, who asked me to join their bands. I couldn't do that because I enjoyed playing Thad's arrangements so much. That definitely led me to where I am now. Some years ago I received an honorary doctorate from Manhattan School of Music, which they conferred on me at the graduation ceremony. I said, "Several years ago, I was a student here at Manhattan School of Music and I lasted a couple of months..." and all the kids cheered (laughs).

TNYCJR: Was it intimidating recording a duo album with Oscar Peterson when you were so young?

JF: (Laughs) What do you think? I was 22, I didn't know what I was doing. That came about through Dizzy and I think that he talked to Norman Granz about me. So they set up the recording with Oscar and the next year I did a quartet record. The recording with Oscar went pretty quickly. I think that we were done in about an hour and forty-five minutes. He asked, "What do you want to play?" I said, "I don't know." So Oscar said, "'A Train', take one. We're doing it in three" and he started playing. So I sort of faked my way through "A Train", "Autumn Leaves", "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and whatever else we played. I don't remember much else. It was definitely scary but Oscar was very welcoming, very gracious, because he knew I was out of my element, out of my depth at that time.

TNYCJR: What are your current bands?

JF: I have a quartet and a big band. Sometimes I'll do a special configuration called The Triumph of Trumpets, which usually includes Sean Jones, Terell Stafford and myself, along with my rhythm section of David Hazeltine, Kiyoshi Kitagawa and Dion Parson. Sometimes we'll have African percussion or guests, depending on the budget available. Then I have the Jon Faddis Jazz Orchestra of New York, which is a continuation of the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, which I led for ten years.

TNYCJR: You haven't recorded as a leader recently.

JF: I thought I had a deal worked out earlier this year but it fell through. I was writing music and had my sketches laid out. We are looking to see what else is available. I've been in New York and on the scene since 1971 and 45 years later I'm getting contracts that would be offered to someone who just graduated college, new on the scene. I think that's disrespectful and inappropriate.

TNYCJR: I know a lot of labels ask for a cut of publishing on your compositions as well.

JF: It's fruitful for the record company because of all the digitization of the music and people are streaming and sharing. The record business has changed. I was in the studio with Miles and Noah Evans, Gil Evans' sons. They're doing a tribute to Gil. It was great seeing a lot of the guys that I played with in the '70s and '80s, but who knows what's going to happen with the recording?

TNYCJR: You always have crowd-funding.

JF: My main focus is my family and my six-year-old son. I'm working enough right now where I have the option of spending a little more time at home and helping him to grow and teach him some things, that's my choice. I know a lot of musicians who had children, spent most of the time on the road and missed seeing their children grow. I'm trying not to let that happen. I was late coming to the party, I was 57.

TNYCJR: How do you choose music for a record date?

JF: Sometimes I get input from the record company. Other times I might have freedom to do what I want, which is what happened on the last record I did ten years ago, *Teranga*. I had guests like Clark Terry, Gary Smulyan, Frank Wess, Russell Malone, just some friends to get together and play some music. When I'm guesting at a high school or college and I'm doing master classes or clinics, I have some of my music arranged for big band and I'll send that out. Dizzy, of course, gave me tons of his big band music.

TNYCJR: You share with students from personal experience.

JF: There are so many things, from copyrighting their compositions to how they want the public to perceive them by writing a 150-word biography. How would you like to be seen in the public eye? What do you want them to know about you? My wife, who is a great writer and attorney, helps me with that and sometimes comes into the class and takes them through copyright issues. What happens when you co-write something or you're in a cooperative band? Did you have a contract? Legal issues that students might not be aware of. Then there's the history of the music, which is what I like to dwell on with them and try to get them to have some respect for a lot of the musicians who helped to create this music and some who even died for this music. I teach a senior college class and a graduate class of students who are pursuing a Master's degree so they can teach. So I make sure that they know the history of this music. Everyone talks about Jamestown and the first settlers in America, the first settlers have been here for 30,000 years (laughs). Such a Eurocentric view that we have in our history books for kids. I try to let them know about field hollers, spirituals and the blues, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and Freddie Keppard, who, for that matter, turned down that first [jazz] recording session [for Victor] and how important that is. I'll play them some of that music. So to trumpet players who are only listening to Roy Hargrove, Sean Jones, Wynton Marsalis, Terell Stafford, some of the hot guys, I'll say, "Learn this" and give them Louis Armstrong's "Weather Bird" or "Cornet Chop Suey" or just the intro to "West End Blues" and watch them struggle. Then I say, "Here's what you do and how you do it." Then I introduce them to lesser known trumpeters they might not know: Bix Beiderbecke, Roy Eldridge and those in the Swing Era like Harry James, Buck Clayton, Sweets Edison, Ziggy Elman, Bunny Berigan and those guys. Dizzy, Fats, Miles and Kenny Dorham, Red Rodney. Who is that? Blue Mitchell, you never heard him? No, but I like that! Or I'll play a 23-year-old Woody Shaw. I have them do a lot of listening and transcribing, a lot of work on changes and send them out to get them on the scene. There are a couple of former students, Bruce Harris, who is making quite a name for himself in New York, and another was Max Darché, who not a lot of people know but I tell audiences he reminds me of me when I was his age. Young and black, only he's white.

TNYCJR: There are also trumpeters like Booker Little who died young but made an impact.

JF: Absolutely. Earlier this semester I gave one of my

students an assignment to learn Booker's solo on "Milestones". He gave up after a month. That's the kind of stuff I love, not giving them something that they can't do, but giving them a goal to reach. That was just one instance where the trumpeter couldn't do that, but I have other ones who say, "Okay" and come in and play the stuff and I say "Excellent". Then I give them the next one.

TNYCJR: You're still growing as a trumpeter.

JF: It's a lifetime of study. In his 70s Dizzy said that, "It's taken me this long to learn what not to play." I can see the growth in my playing, but maybe a lot of people just hear that "He's playing high notes." That's okay if that's what you want to think. But nobody says that when there's a clarinet player or piano player, it just happens to be where I hear music. I hear lines up there, notes up there. It's like second nature to me. We never stop learning about this music. First of all, playing the trumpet is one of the most difficult of instruments, so a lot of my practice is maintenance and trying to keep what I have. I'm in my 60s now and it's not as easy as it was when I was 18. ❖

For more information, visit terangajazz.com. Faddis is at Quaker Friends Meeting Hall Jan. 5th as part of Winter Jazzfest/Jazz Legends for Disability Pride, Birdland Jan. 10th-14th and Juilliard School Peter Jay Sharp Theater Jan. 18th with the Juilliard Jazz Orchestra. See Calendar.

Recommended Listening:

- Oscar Peterson/Jon Faddis – *Oscar Peterson & Jon Faddis* (Pablo, 1975)
- Dizzy Gillespie – *Jam: Montreux '77* (Pablo Live, 1977)
- Jon Faddis – *Legacy* (Concord, 1985)
- Slide Hampton & The JazzMasters (featuring Jimmy Heath & Jon Faddis) – *Dedicated to Diz* (Live at the Village Vanguard) (Telarc Jazz, 1993)
- The Carnegie Hall Jazz Band (Music Director Jon Faddis) – *Eponymous* (Blue Note, 1995)
- Jon Faddis – *Teranga* (Koch, 2005)

(LABEL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

the piano, the breadth of tone in the sax and the timbre of a cymbal. The warmth of a gorgeous tone and the burn of a locked-in tempo. We have faith that a beautiful melody, beautifully recorded, will always find a home." Kudos to Newvelle Records for its adventurous spirit and its commitment to bring the delicious benefits of the sound of vinyl recordings to a new generation. ❖

For more information, visit newvelle-records.com. Artists performing this month include Ben Allison Jan. 7th at New School Glass Box Theater as part of Winter Jazzfest; Jon Cowherd at New School Glass Box Theater Jan. 6th with Nate Smith as part of Winter Jazzfest, Bar Lunático Jan. 9th with Mike Moreno and Jazz at Kitano Jan. 26th with Audrey Silver; Kevin Hays at Club Bonafide Jan. 6th with Uri Gurvich and Jan. 7th with Gregoire Maret, Jazz at Kitano Jan. 12th and Cornelia Street Underground Jan. 26th with Eduardo Belo; Frank Kimbrough at Mezzrow Jan. 12th and Greenwich House Music School Jan. 27th; Aruán Ortiz at Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center Jan. 3rd and Jan. 19th with Francisco Mora Catlett; John Patitucci at Flushing Town Hall Jan. 21st with Gustavo Casenave and Smoke Jan. 25th with Antonio Farao; Noah Preminger at Rockwood Music Hall Jan. 15th with Michael Feinberg; and Chris Tordini at Le Poisson Rouge Jan. 2nd with Chris Speed, Korzo Jan. 3rd, New School 5th Floor Theater Jan. 6th with Andy Milne and with Jim Black, both as part of Winter Jazzfest, New School 12th Street Auditorium Jan. 7th with Becca Stevens as part of Winter Jazzfest, The Stone Jan. 10th with Jim Black and ShapeShifter Lab Jan. 15th with Zack Foley. See Calendar.