



Keiji Haino/Jozef Dumoulin/Teun Verbruggen

Leo Genovese

Argentinosaurus

Newvelle NV006LP ★★★★★

Leo Genovese (p), Esperanza Spalding (b, v) and Jack DeJohnette (d).
Rec. 29 September 2015

Boutique vinyl-only label Newvelle are trying a new subscription model, releasing six albums a year, or seasons in the parlance of this classy operator. And being run by jazz pianist Elan Mehler the releases benefit from highly-refined production values (lovely gatefold sleeve and specially-written poem by Tracy K. Smith) admittedly for a higher annual fee aimed squarely at audiophile collectors. All this is pertinent as it positively affects the creative process too, as can be heard on this last release of 2016 on the label from the compelling 30-something pianist Leo Genovese. Rising to prominence as a featured sideman with Grammy-winning bass star Esperanza Spalding (the latter has returned the favour here) with a powerful supporting performance of her own. Completing this vibrant triumvirate is an equally in-form Jack DeJohnette who plays with the gusto of a man half his 74 years, as well as providing some haunting, wordless vocals on the closing *Ethiopian Blues*. Spalding also adds vocals in Spanish on *Chacarera Y Mas* and *Vidalita*, while everything bristles with the kind of intimate intensity that a single-day recording session can inspire. Genovese's approach favours subtly and nuance via angular harmonic structures and probing solos seeking out distinctive harmonic terrain. There's plenty of fire too, especially on the outstanding latin workout *Diablos* that kicks off the flipside in imperious fashion. Yet it's Spalding who's the surprise package here, laying into some deep yet fluid bass lines, the odd knotty solo, while melding into the trio with impressive empathy and very little ego complimenting and cajoling DeJohnette and Genovese to greater heights. The trio wring

maximum musicality from each piece, the results demanding repeat listens of this refreshingly unfettered trio. **Mike Flynn**

Keiji Haino/Jozef Dumoulin/Teun Verbruggen

The Miracles Of Only One Thing

Sub Rosa SR439 ★★★★★

Keiji Haino (g, v, f, gongs), Jozef Dumoulin (ky) and Teun Verbruggen (d, elec).
Rec. September 2015.

This live (and very lively) exchange teams legendary Japanese musician Keiji Haino with Belgian duo Josef Dumoulin and Teun Verbruggen, for an improvisational bout in four rounds that sounds like it might have been bloody. All three players are playing hard on this set, with Verbruggen's solid drum beatings being the pulse that holds the group together as Haino and Dumoulin skitter off in various different directions, while still managing to keep everything together. The opening *Non-Dark Destinations* is a lengthy and involved work and the rocker here, with tossed salvos of electronic flak bursting through the thick mesh curtain of growling guitar and rumbling Fender Rhodes organ that has also been erected. Elsewhere Haino's vocal violently shakes up *Hotel Chaika*, while *Snow Is Frequent, Though Light, In Winter* offers up a form of respite before *Tonight* draws in for one final ethereal blast of flute and voice.

Edwin Pouncey

Mary Halvorson Octet

Away With You

Firehouse 12 ★★★★★

Mary Halvorson (g), Jonathan Finlayson (t), Jon Irabagon (as), Ingrid Laubrock (ts), Jacob Garchik (t), Susan Alcorn (pedal steel g), John Hébert (b) and Ches Smith (d).
Rec. 17-18 December 2015

The boundary-flouting farsightedness of guitarist, composer and bandleader Mary Halvorson is at its peak on *Away With You*. It finds her reconvening the septet with which

she performed on her captivating *Illusionary Sea* (2013) and add an eighth member, pedal steel guitarist Susan Alcorn. The new recruit is no stranger herself to straddling stylistic forms, her maverick aesthetic encompassing outlaw country, twisted tangos, classical composition and beyond, deep into the realms of improvisation. Here, though, Alcorn deploys a flurry of clean, silvery-singing slides and sharp staccato stabs, tones arguably more identifiable with the instrument's conservative pedigree. But the Octet busies itself to run a scurry of bustling ideas and explosive set-pieces within which to relocate and assimilate her glistening, sometimes willowy, chimes, obfuscating the memories of a genre-specific habit along the way. Halvorson in particular seems buoyed by the fresh spectral presence, joyously skittering spider-like about her frets, only occasionally settling on the barebones of folk music and plush pop refrains (as on the title-track), for a well-earned breather.

Spencer Grady

Art Hirahara

Central Line

Posi-Tone PR8161 ★★★★★

Art Hirahara (p), Donny McCaslin (s), Linda Oh (b) and Rudy Royston (d).
Rec. date not stated

Titled after the Chuo-Sen, the subway train line that connects up the jazz clubs in Tokyo, *Central Line* signals a return to Art Hirahara's Japanese roots. Originally from the Bay Area and, since 2003, a Brooklynite, Hirahara was raised and educated in the US. On his third album for the Posi-Tone label, the pianist-composer injects an elegant blend of classic post-bop piano, watery impressionist and romantic classical music and latin fusion elements. Alongside this, a pair of Japanese folk songs mark his connection to his homeland's

ancestors, although their infusion with Americana reflects his divided loyalties. Guest saxophonist Donny McCaslin, in a straighter ahead mode than with his own band, is on the money, for example demonstrating an aching Dexter Gordon-like melancholy on the ballad *Astray*. For his part, Hirahara plays everything with a tender touch and sumptuous fluidity in the best tradition of the contemporary mainstream.

Selwyn Harris

Barb Jungr & John McDaniel

Come Together

Kristalyn KLCD04 ★★★★★

Barb Jungr (v, harm) and John McDaniel (v, p).
Rec. date not stated



The impetus for this new collaboration between award-winning vocalist and performer Barb

Jungr and Grammy, Emmy and Tony Award-winning producer, composer, conductor and pianist John McDaniel came about when the duo put together a Beatles medley for a gala performance at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut in August 2015. If *Come Together* doesn't quite reach the same artistic heights as Jungr's interpretations of Dylan and Cohen, there's still plenty to delight the ear and warm the heart, not least the way in which the duo's vocals blend so mellifluously with each other on songs such as *Things We Said Today* and *I Will*. Then there's Jungr's compelling vocal on the title-track and forceful harmonica playing on *Back In The USSR*, and McDaniel's beautiful piano voicings on *Eleanor Rigby* and *The Fool On The Hill*. Reimagined as an almost *Sondheimesque* showstopper, the latter's solo take on *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* also impresses. **Peter Quinn**

