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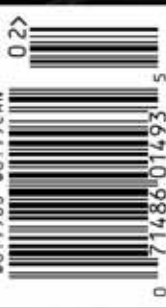
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A Personalized Perspective

Three trios and a quartet—led by a drummer, a guitarist, a keyboardist and a bassist, respectively—demonstrate an ability to cast a wide net and still remain within the jazz tradition. From originals to classic rock standards, soul, blues and a touch of Brazil, these players rely on their deep love and knowledge of modes and material, and a commitment to laying it down.

Known for his work on the Hammond B-3 organ, **Raphael Wressnig** lets loose on **Chicken Burrito (Pepper Cake 2110; 32:06 ★★★)**. Featuring longtime collaborator Alex Schultz on guitar and celebrated soul and jazz sideman James Gadson on drums, the trio moves with virtuosic ease while the groove never stops, from the album opener, “Chunky Thighs,” through the funk feel of the title track and into the laid-back “Tiny Dog Blues.”

Ordering info: raphaelwressnig.com

The Humanity Quartet is bassist Sean Smith, drummer Leon Parker, their longtime acquaintance, tenor saxophonist Joel Frahm, and guitarist Peter Bernstein (whose association with Smith and Parker dates back to 1987). Formed in 2016 as a response to a world gone mad, its first recording, **Humanity (Cellar Live 060118; 64:11 ★★★)**, swings with elegance and proficiency while working toward the group’s goal: bringing humankind together through music. Consisting entirely of original, modern material, cuts like “Jobimiola” and “Samba For Evandrea” (with vocals by Marya Lawrence) go for a warm Brazilian vibe.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com

The Denny Seiwell Trio also favors Brazilian styles on its second recording, **Boomerang (Quarto Valley; 55:08 ★★★)**. With one previous release (*Reckless Abandon*) to its credit, drummer Seiwell leads

guitarist John Chiodini (Natalie Cole, Tony Bennet) and organist Joe Bagg (Madeleine Peyroux, Larry Coryell) through two pieces by Brazilian musician César Camargo Mariano, plus a samba, “Cascades Of The 7 Waterfalls” by Alex Malheiros, as well as the Chiodini-penned “Cheetahs And Gazelles,” with its own Brazilian changes. Seiwell was a founding member of Paul McCartney’s Wings and there’s a dramatic version of “Live & Let Die” included here, plus a guest appearance by rocker Edgar Winter, who hits the saxophone throughout the unfortunately titled “Baby Mama.” The familiar “Cold Duck Time,” by Eddie Harris, and the Jule Styne/Sammy Cahn standard “I Fall In Love Too Easily” also find their way into the group’s wide-ranging palette.

Ordering info: quartovalleyrecords.com

Bobby Broom—who made a name for himself as a sideman with Sonny Rollins and Dr. John—ushers his troupe, the Organization, through **Soul Fingers (Clean Sweep 0118; 58:38 ★★★)**, a collection of rock classics that inspired the guitarist when he was a youth during the 1960s and ‘70s. Following trio albums and quartet releases, as well as recordings with Deep Blue Organ Trio, *Soul Fingers* was produced by Steve Jordan. With Ben Paterson on organ and Kobie Watkins on drums, the trio gelled opening dates for Steely Dan. (They do an arrangement of “Do It Again”). There are also pop entries, like Bobbie Gentry’s “Ode To Billie Joe,” The Beatles’ “Come Together” and “While My Guitar Gently Weeps,” and even easy rockers by Seals and Crofts, and Bread. Each gets Broom’s treatment, the guitarist voicing every note of the distinct melodies, then cleverly winding up the set with the sweetly flavored “Guitar Man.”

Ordering info: bobbybroom.com



Draksler/Eldh/Lillinger *Punkt.Vrt.Plastik*

INTAKT 318

★★★★★

The lineup of any ensemble has an alchemical quality to it. The right combination of personalities and styles can yield nothing less than gold. But throw in one bad element and it quickly can turn leaden.

That was the risk drummer Christian Lillinger and bassist Petter Eldh took when they started working with pianist Kaja Draksler in a new trio. The pair already were familiar with one another, having provided the backbone for the marvelous free-jazz quartet Amok Amor. Draksler was the X-factor they brought into their creative partnership, a new source of heat that could bend their playing into new shapes. The resulting work is as invitingly, thrillingly jumbled and postmodern as their album’s title. The connection that Lillinger and Eldh have built up over the past decade is still clear and strong, but Draksler flows and spills around it like a steady stream of water, slickening up a craggy rock.

The best tracks here have the feel of a classic jazz album subjected to William S. Burroughs’ cut-up method or the whims of a particularly keyed-up remixer. “Punkt Torso” could be a ballad, but the otherwise fluid melodies and gentle splash of the drums sputter and break in this trio’s hands. It’s like watching a colorful, glitchy livestream. And it only makes those moments of clarity and accessibility—the slowly unfurling intro of “Body Decline,” Draksler’s pensive solo that begins “Life Is Transient” or when it sounds like Lillinger and Eldh are going to slip into a tight funk groove—carry you through the album’s more challenging moments. They’re like those moments at the first peak of a roller coaster ride, before you’re sent tumbling into a adrenalized thrill ride.

—Robert Ham

Punkt.Vrt.Plastik.: Nuremberg Amok; Evicted; Punkt Torso; Azan; Veins; Body Decline; Plastik; Momentan; Life Is Transient. (41:55)

Personnel: Kaja Draksler, piano; Petter Eldh, bass; Christian Lillinger, drums.

Ordering info: intaktrec.ch