

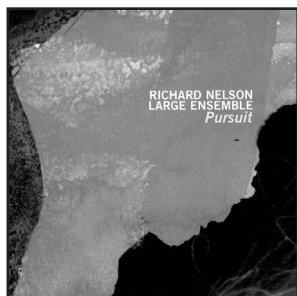


Panamericana Suite
Paquito D'Rivera (MCG Jazz)
by Marcia Hillman

Cuban-born Paquito D'Rivera brings his abundant, eclectic talent and special vision to this new CD, recorded live in Pittsburgh. His talent is embodied in his playing on both saxophone and clarinet and vision in synthesizing the various rhythms and traditions of the Latino musical world with jazz. In order to do this, he has convened an international orchestra of Pedro Martinez (batas, timbales, vocals), Pernell Saturnino (percussion), Oscar Stagnaro (bass) and Mark Walker (drums) in the rhythm section with Alon Yavnai (piano), Dana Leong (trombone, cello), Hector Del Curto (bandoneon), Andy Narell (steel pans), Dave Samuels (vibraphone/marimba), Diego Urcola (trumpet), Edmar Castaneda (harp) and Puerto Rican lyric soprano Brenda Feliciano. D'Rivera's original material - except a selection each by Roberto Pansera and Dizzy Gillespie - makes up the album. The arrangements, save two, also come from his pen.

The opening track "Waltz For Moe" (a tune written for saxophonist Moe Koffman) incorporates a Colombian/Venezuelan joropo rhythm with Colombian Castaneda's unique harp work and then a version of a Martinique mazurka for Narell's fine steel pans solo. Gillespie's "Con Alma" is given a fresh interpretation via Peruvian Stagnaro's arrangement utilizing festivo and zamba-lando rhythms from his homeland. Argentinean Urcola handles the arrangement on "Preludio No. 3", effectively combining the bandoneon with D'Rivera's masterful clarinet work to improvise within the tango feel. Urcola also stands out on the "Tojo" cha cha cut. The title track (commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center and premiered in 2000) encompasses D'Rivera's vision, presenting styles and rhythms from the Caribbean and Central and South America, highlighted by Feliciano's rich, full voice and Martinez' drumming. This is an exciting journey through Latin and world rhythms and a prime example of how they work well together with jazz.

For more information, visit mcgjazz.org. D'Rivera is at Rose Theatre Nov. 11th-12th. See Calendar.



Pursuit
Richard Nelson Large Ensemble (Heliotrope)
by Donald Elfman

This bold and striking new big band recording reflects a giant, generous world of influences. Guitarist Richard Nelson has written a suite of music that would seem at home on a jazz stage or in a contemporary concert-music venue. The selections seem tailored to the particular colors and talents of his ensemble but reach out, he says, "to honor a quality of child-like innocence ... in these over-stimulated, conflict-ridden times."

The writing is complex but emotionally engaging, dense yet clean and resonant. Nelson is a teacher and

so his music is also communicative and instructive. "Portal", the suite's beginning, features the spare, haunting sound of trumpeter Don Stratton, who is at the center of the spacious introduction as it develops into some more spirited disorder. Stratton's solo grows more intense over outbursts from the orchestra and the ferocious rhythmic underpinning of Nelson's guitar, Cassidy Holden's bass and Steve Grover's drums. This is followed by some "joyful noise" from alto saxophonist Pamela Jenkins, again with orchestral urging. The next movement, "Innocence", immediately offers some jagged thematic material that ratchets up the intensity until it seems to disappear and we're in a beautiful, expressive drum solo.

The colors of the orchestra are spellbinding, evocative and powerful. "Search" finds a swirling soprano sax (Tim O'Dell) weaving in and out of the orchestra. "Azure" suggests the blues - a sinuous, sinister blues - with a come-hither tenor solo by Frank Mauceri and a darkish, devilish and ever so appealing turn from flutist Bill Moseley that becomes a solo cadenza leading to the last section. A chamber music section - flute, viola and cello - works toward an out-and-out jam from the full band with tricky counterpoint, a guitar solo from the leader and some more nifty ensemble work. And, finally, we're back to "Innocence" material and the sound of that Stratton trumpet again.

As an added treat, we get two quintet pieces - "Abol Stream" and "Stillness" - for O'Dell, Stratton, Nelson, Holden and Grover. The mood is quieter as the tunes respond to what Nelson describes as "the exceptional beauty and uncluttered quiet I've experienced in the mountainous backcountry of northern Maine."

For more information, visit richardnelsonmusic.com. Nelson is at Saint Peter's Nov. 11th with Aardvark Jazz Orchestra. See Calendar.



Hearts Wide Open
Gilad Hekselman (Le Chant du Monde)
by Matthew Kassel

Guitarist Gilad Hekselman is a sensitive and lyrical improviser. He has good taste for melody, judging by the ballads he's covered - "I Fall in Love too Easily", "April in Paris", "Someone to Watch Over Me" - and a few of his compositions from his last two records. He's a smart and responsive accompanist. But until *Hearts Wide Open*, his third record to date, you got the sense that he was still finding his way as a leader, that he hadn't yet lassoed his talent as a bold and imposing young jazz musician.

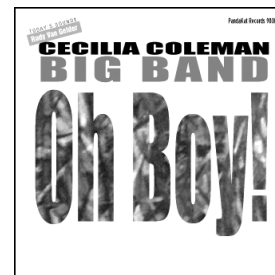
Hekselman wrote every song here, some for trio (bassist Joe Martin and drummer Marcus Gilmore) and some for quartet, adding tenor saxophonist Mark Turner. The leader thrives in the trio format, delivering arching, methodical solos, comping his lines with inventive chords, as on "The Bucket Kicker". He packs a lot into a delicate phrase, his tone echoey yet full.

It seems that on this album the guitarist is going for a higher level of simplicity, something beyond a virtuosic solo, of which there are many. It's not because of the Tibetan bowls that ring out in the first and last songs or the accompanying whistling and strummy acoustic guitar. It's apparent with the quartet pieces. Turner - who can reach the altissimo range on his tenor - really helps to bring out the urgency and romance of Hekselman's songs. On the title track, they state the

melody in tandem, making for a beautiful polyphony. At the end of "Understanding", Hekselman vamps beneath Turner's extended solo and it's this - which is kind of heroic - that really makes this section. It's also apparent on the introverted "Flower", in which Hekselman repeats the same peaceful chord structure for about five minutes over a jaunty beat put down by the rhythm section. The chords he plays stick in your head. Hekselman still may be finding his way as a leader, but he's now made the search much easier.

For more information, visit chantdumonde.com. Hekselman is at Smalls Nov. 14th with Ari Hoenig and Bar Next Door Nov. 26th as a leader. See Calendar.

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