

Theo Travis' Double Talk

Transgression

Cherry Red Records

EANTCD 1052 ★★★

Theo Travis (ts, fl, kys), Mike Outram (g), Pete Whittaker (org) and Nic France (d, perc). Rec. January 2015



Ah, The Mahavishnu Crimson Orkestral Travis and co. have a ball subsuming all those splendid

rocktastic influences of their youth into a heady mix that should appeal to jazz, rock and prog devotees. The opening 'Fire Mountain' says it all, with its dirgy, McLaughlin-esque theme, sudden Crims quotes and paint stripping energy. Outram is in outrageous form and France clatters away like he may never get near a drum kit again. But beneath the sound and fury there's a rigorous musicality: Whittaker's keys are always subtle and bind the whole project, mixing Larry Young type chordings with a feel for colours (check out 'The Call') that liberates Travis and Outram's more ecstatic voices. But it ain't all prog: Outram lays down a Peter Green vibe on 'Smokin' At Klooks' that'll have the hair standing up on the back of your neck. Somehow Travis keeps the whole soundstorm together: hopefully this is a project that has legs, and not a one-release wonder. But wonder it is. **Andy Robson**

Weavels

The Living Puzzle

Discus 51CD ★★★

Chris Cundy (b cl), Alex Ward (el g) and Mick Beck (bassoon, rec, nose fl, swanee whistle). Rec. May 2012

There's something quintessentially English about this music: as absurd as *Monty Python* or *The Goons* and as quietly subversive as the films of Lindsay Anderson, while never drawing unnecessary attention to the diffident brilliance of its three protagonists. It's true that the whole set – recorded partly in the studio and partly live at London's Freedom Of The City festival in 2012 – fizzles with surreal humour (does Mick Beck genuinely expect not to raise a smile when he puts the swanee whistle to his lips?), but it's directed and kept aloft by some devilishly accomplished musicianship. Hear how Alex Ward digs into frenzied shredding of the electric guitar, while Chris Cundy's clarinet swoops and shrieks like an angry peregrine falcon, and Beck's oboe pokes around in the undergrowth – while all three investigate different aspects of the same puzzle. The trio's debut album, *Weavels At Nether Edge*, released in 2008, promised much. This is a fine follow-up. **Daniel Spicer**



Lizz Wright Freedom & Surrender

Concord ★★★★★

Lizz Wright (v); plus various personnel. Rec. date not stated

While Lizz Wright's previous release, her 2010 album *Fellowship*, provided telling insights into her gospel roots, the genre-defying sound-world of *Freedom & Surrender* seems to place the singer in the same aesthetic orbit as storytellers such as Nina Simone. Produced by Larry Klein, Wright's fifth album and Concord debut *Freedom & Surrender* is framed by (and named after) two extraordinarily powerful songs by her long-standing collaborator, Toshi Reagon: the propulsive album opener 'Freedom' (penned solely by Reagon) and the seductive 'Surrender', co-written with Wright. A passionate Nick Drake fan, Wright's captivating take on 'River Man' possesses a luminosity that compels attention. With a gorgeous vibes/celeste intro that evokes memories of Little Anthony and the Imperials, Gregory Porter lends his mellifluous baritone to the intimate duet 'Right Where You Are', a song Wright co-wrote with J.D. Souther. As for Wright herself, her uniquely expressive voice has never sounded more beautiful, possessing a kind of redemptive power that goes straight to the heart, nowhere more so than the impressionistic 'Here and Now' with its deliciously ambiguous harmonies, one of a number of songs Wright penned with Klein and his songwriting partner, David Batteau. **Peter Quinn**

Short Cuts// New Releases

AKA Balkan Moon/Alepha

Double Live **Outthere** ★★
AKA Balkan Moon is an influential contemporary avant-fusion trio from Belgium that have embarked on these kind of world-improv projects since the mid 1990s. This double live CD features two creative collaborations with Balkan and middle eastern musicians.

Dennis Angel On Track

Timeless Grooves ★
Flugelhorn player Dennis Angel has Jason Miles, the 1980s keyboardist to Miles and the stars, as sideman and producer, but even he can't save this comatose-inducing smooth pop/soul jazz set.

Roy Assaf Trio

Second Row Behind the Painter

One Trick Dog

 ★★★★★

Roy Assaf, a lyrical young New York-based ex-Berklee pianist, brings to his new piano trio recording (featuring originals and standards) an uplifting Mediterranean spirit, as it is with other Israeli ex-pats such as bassist Avishai Cohen.

David Benoit featuring

Jane Monheit

 2 in Love

Concord Records ★
Mainstream easy listening fodder from the Grammy-nominated pianist Benoit who's joined by the Grammy-nominated vocalist Jane Monheit on MOR pop originals and Broadway songs.

Better than TV

 Late

betterthantv.co.uk

 ★★★★★

This Cambridge-based Mingus-ish, bop-related quintet (featuring upcoming trombonist Tom Green) is led by the bassist Sergio Contrino who penned this set of light-hearted, engaging compositions.

Fabrizio Bosso Duke Verve

 ★★★★★

This is the warm-toned, suave Italian trumpeter's 17th album as bandleader and fourth for Verve, playing the hits of Duke Ellington, his quartet augmented by a horn/brass ensemble playing charts consummately arranged by the session's leader Paolo Silvestri.

Cappelletti/Di Castri/Ditmas

Homage to Paul Bley

 Leo ★★★★★

The experienced Italian bassist Furio Di Castri and American drummer Bruce Ditmas both played with Paul Bley, and with compositions that are mostly by the third man, the Italian pianist Arrigo Cappelletti, it bears an affectionate kinship with its dedicatee.

Jeff Denson Trio + Lee Konitz

Ridgeway Records

 ★★★★★

Bassist Jeff Denson has recorded with Lee Konitz on a handful of previous occasions. Here his trio is joined by the veteran altoist treating us to some rare scat singing, as well as Tristano songbook interpretations and a few Konitz staples.

Giacomo Gates Everything is Cool Savant

 ★★★★★

The vocalese veteran Giacomo Gates with the cognac baritone pays his respects to his hipster vocal heroes including Babs Gonzales and Oscar Brown Jr, alongside a group featuring accomplished pianist John Di Martino.

Morten Haxholm Quartet

Viridian

Haxholm Schmidt Moras

 Moras

Gateway Music

 ★★★★★

A pair of fine-sounding CDs featuring bands led by Danish bassist Morten Haxholm, his quintet featuring guitarist

Lage Lund is the more coolly reflective contemporary post-bop of the pair while the second *Moras*, which is co-led by Danish drummer Rasmus Schmidt and recorded in Brooklyn with Seamus Blake and John Escreet, perhaps inevitably has a slightly rougher-edged New York vibe to it.

Linda Hoyle The Fetch

Angel Air

 ★★

The former vocalist of the band Affinity, this is the Norma Winstone-ish vocalist Linda Hoyle's band (featuring Gary Husband on drums) very first release since 1971 when she recorded the monstrously rare LP *Pieces of Me*.

Hu Vibrational The Epic

Botanical Beat Suite *Meta*

Records

 ★★★★★

The erstwhile Yusef Lateef percussionist Adam Rudolph's project features bassist Bill Laswell and guitarist Eivind Aarset and its cultural rhythmic mix of African/dance grooves and ambient electronica has a deep resonance.

Darius Jones Quartet

Le Bébé de Brigitte

AUM Fidelity

 ★★

The fifth instalment in New York-based alto saxophonist/Matthew Shipp collaborator Darius Jones' *Man'ish Boy* series features French vocalist Emilie Lebras in a genre-defying set that runs the gamut from bluesy cabaret to leftfield improv

Roan Kearsey-Lawson

Classical Conversations

144 Records

 ★★★★★

The Gillingham-based tuned percussionist's sonically atmospheric chamber trio (featuring multireedist Duncan Lamont Jr and guitarist Dominic Ashworth) offers a tidy fusion of classical, jazz and world music elements.

Mighty Sam McClain & Knut

Reiersrud

 Tears of the World

ACT

 ★★

Mighty Sam McClain, a charismatic New Orleans septuagenarian, sings the blues alongside veteran guitarist Knut Reiersrud and a Norwegian band, without so much as a hint of the so-called 'Nordic tone'.

Orchestre National De Jazz

Europa Berlin

Onjazz Records

 ★★★★★

Directed by the broadly-idiomatic French Orchestre National's current leader/guitarist Olivier Benoit, this is the second in the *Europa* 'city portraits' series following last year's *Europa Paris* and captures something of the volatile twists and turns of Berlin's musical/historical past and present.

Burkhard Reinartz

Eine Olive Des Nichts

ECM New series

 ★★

Burkhard Reinartz, a Cologne-based radio author and director, has set a series of German poems to sparse, atmospheric music selected from a broad range of artists from the ECM catalogue from Staiko to Arvo Pärt, Arve Henriksen to the Tarkovsky Quartet.

Brad Allen Williams

 Lamar

Sojourn Records

 ★★

Not sure that the jazz world needs another dedicated 'classic' organ trio recording, but the guitarist Brad Allen Williams, a sideman for vocalist José James, alongside Pat Bianchi and Tyshawn Sorey, have gone ahead and cut another one all the same.

Selwyn Harris