

Jazz Track

By John Shand

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Steve Hunter Band|Dig My Garden|Birdland BL015

Steve Hunter has long been alive to the possibilities of cross-pollinating flamenco with jazz. Its intrinsic drama plays to the strengths of Hunter's potent band, and this studio album's very live sound captures the visceral excitement. *Cazador* is the band's finest recorded work to date. It begins with scintillating flamenco bass from Hunter over disquieting, distant organ from Matt McMahon, who switches to piano to share with Hunter a pensive theme that still sustains the suspense. When drummer James Hauptmann gatecrashes this reverie with a thumping groove, the stage is set for James Muller to unleash a guitar solo of such ferocity you will be ducking for cover; the sort of playing that makes his live performances so extraordinary, but which often has been somewhat pasteurized on disc. Not this time.

The catholics|Village|Bugle BUG 007

Last year The catholics appeared to have reinvented themselves with the release of "Gondola." The relentless chirpiness was replaced with a broader emotional palette, painted on sparser, more atmospheric canvases. That reinvention was apparently short-lived, however, because with Village they return to the breezy rhythms and perky melodies that made the band so popular. I prefer the "Gondola" mood, here preserved for one track via the serenity of slide guitarist Bruce Reid's *Grace*. Nonetheless there is much to satisfy amid the jollity, as when Sandy Evans' soprano saxophone suddenly takes glorious flight from the fluid Afro groove of guitarist Jonathan Pease's *Pelicans*. Leader Lloyd Swanton has only penned two tunes this time, the repertoire being fattened with Bernie McGann's much-loved *Salaam* and Barney McCall's insistent *Ransome*.



Adrian Klumpes|Be Still|Leaf Bay 56CD

One of the moods music does best is eerie, and it doesn't come much more eerie than this. Adrian Klumpes, having made his mark in the nu-jazz of Triosk, has excelled on his solo debut. The sounds, all from a piano, are twisted by mechanical preparation or tortured by electronic treatment. Even the "straight" piano of the bewitching title track has some

subtle treatment, so the notes seem to drift in a disquieting limbo. Klumpes' concept is not purely about texture and effect, having at its core a very pure beauty, charged with Gothic expressionism. Radical sounds are controlled with the same finesse as the keyboard itself, the notes sometimes shattering like fine crystal over ominous rumbling. The nursery-rhyme sparseness of the melodies and the use of repetition compound the pervading unease.



John Coltrane|My Favorite Things: At Newport|Impulse! 0602517350540

The only unreleased material here is a 23-minute *Impressions*, and even that has been available in edited form on "To the Beat of a Different Drum." The remaining five tracks, recorded at the Newport Festival in '63 and '65, appeared on either "Selflessness" or "New

Thing at Newport." So does less than one track justify the CD's price for avid collectors? Probably. The '63 set had Roy Haynes rather than Elvin Jones on drums, and it's fascinating to hear his lighter but more bustling approach in the middle of the Coltrane/McCoy Tyner/Jimmy Garrison whirlpool. He's generally more reactive than the proactive, climactic Jones, although when Tyner and Garrison drop out after their brilliant (previously deleted) solos on *Impressions*, they leave Haynes and Coltrane igniting each other in an 11-minute tenor/drums inferno.

Blow|Blue Sun Red Moon|Birdland BL014

Drummer Ted Vining and pianist Bob Sedergreen have never left any doubt that their music has heart. Vining has often literally shouted it, with rambunctious cymbal crashes and reckless punctuations. These two Melbourne stalwarts continue to galvanize other players with their energy and sheer joy in making music. Alto saxophonist Peter Harper stands out, rushing to center-stage in the opening *And Heaven Called* with a sound as electrifying as a police siren in a drug cabal. It's broad and braying, and an ample match for any boisterousness Vining can hurl at him. The band members, completed by trumpeter Ian Dixon, trombonist Simon Kent, and bassist Mick Meagher, have penned the tunes. As the sextet's name suggests, they are open-ended blowing vehicles, and the playing is guaranteed to raise the spirits.



John Zorn, Mark Ribot|Asmodeus|Tzadik/Birdland TZ 7362

John Zorn may be the best-documented composer and improviser ever. Here guitarist Marc Ribot teams up with bassist Trevor Dunn and drummer G. Calvin Weston to turn ten of John Zorn's compositions from "Masada Book 2: The Book of Angels" into searing rock extravaganzas. However stylistically diverse Ribot has been across his previous projects, nothing will have prepared you for this. Zorn's serpentine tunes are relentlessly blasted and twisted by the guitarist, and the presence of Weston—who famously fuelled some of Ornette Coleman's harmolodic adventures—hugely compounds the ferocity. Imagine a blend of James Blood Ulmer and John McLaughlin at his most savage, on, say, Miles Davis's *Tribute to Jack Johnson*, and you have a sense of the cyclonic force; an overkill that would be dangerous, were it not such bone-jarring fun.