



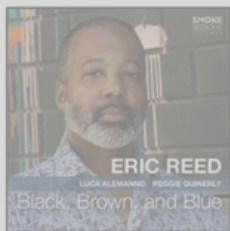
True Stories
Mark Wade Trio (Mark Wade Music)
by Terrell Holmes

When paying homage to one's artistic models it is wise not to walk too closely in their footsteps. Faithful interpretations of classic works can be entertaining, perhaps even moving, but too much reverence might result in nothing more than an echo. Bassist Mark Wade honors his influences by using elements of their work as points of departure for his own composing on *True Stories*. With Tim Harrison (piano) and Scott Neumann (drums), Wade filters past music through his unique lens to produce an engaging album of vivid originals.

The driving, Miles Davis-inspired "I Feel More Like I Do Now" establishes the band's tensile strength right away. Wade honors Wayne Shorter with "Falling Dolores", a moody, clever mashup of the haunting "Fall" with the more optimistic Shorter composition "Dolores". The tip of the cap to Shorter continues on "In the Market", where the trio takes on Weather Report masterfully, down to the unusual time signatures. The trio has fun with "Piscataway Went That-A-Way", a nod and wink to Fred Hersch's skulking, playful "Swamp Thing". The album downshifts with the ballad "A Simple Song", a shimmering tribute to one of Wade's mentors, the late pianist Frank Kimbrough. The two-part invention "Song with Orange and Other Things" combines a Charles Mingus tune with a Wade original, both of which joyously recall Mingus' big band pedigree, passionate gospel inflections and bear-hug warmth. Wade doesn't even need an entire song for his musings. The beautiful suite "The Soldier and the Fiddle", for example, is based on the military march from Igor Stravinsky's "The Soldier's Tale". And Wade borrows the opening bars of "Solokvist", a tune by Corpo (the Swedish jazz band he toured with) for "At the Sunside", the album's crisp closer.

But none of this would matter without the excellent playing of Wade, Neumann and Harrison. They strike a perfect balance throughout *True Stories*. Their interplay is dynamic, with flawless timing and stellar musicianship. Every song is a pleasure to hear, portending that the Mark Wade Trio will undoubtedly be major players on the jazz scene for some time.

For more info, visit markwademusicny.com. This project is at Saint Peter's Mar. 19. See Calendar.



Black, Brown and Blue
Eric Reed (Smoke Sessions)
by Tom Greenland

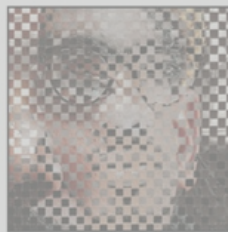
Pianist Eric Reed comes from a gospel church background and emerged with precocious chops

in the late '80s among the pride of "young lions", first gaining notoriety in Wynton Marsalis' band. Now a middle-aged "cat", he has released almost a disc per year since *Soldier's Hymn*, his 1990 debut as a leader. *Black, Brown and Blue*, his 32nd album and fourth for the Smoke Sessions imprint, is one of his best, the title alluding to its theme: songs by composers of color. Mentoring a pair of younger musicians—Luca Alemanno (bass) and Reggie Quinerly (drums)—the leader includes an original by each (Quinerly's "Variation 23", Alemanno's "One for E"). Two tracks feature the gritty but elegant vocals of Calvin B. Rhone (Bill Withers' "Lean on Me") and David Daughtry (Stevie Wonder's "Pastime Paradise"), both active ministers in L.A.'s gospel scene.

The remaining pieces include the title track (an improvised blues) plus covers of Duke Ellington's "I Got It Bad (and That Ain't Good)", which features Reed's subtle but satisfying chord substitutions; Benny Golson's "Along Came Betty", a bossa featuring piled-on phrases that gather momentum, Reed's ecstatic, singing tone recalling Keith Jarrett; Thelonious Monk's "Ugly Beauty", a bouncy, adventurous gambol that quotes the composer's plunging atonal runs; and Horace Silver's "Peace" followed by McCoy Tyner's "Search for Peace" (the latter including a quote of Ornette Coleman's "Peace"); Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes", here rendered in gospel/blues triplets; plus two lesser played gems in Buddy Collette's "Cheryl Ann" and Buster Williams' "Christina", both beautiful ballads with poignant harmony.

The album's impact is in its duality. Though temperate ballads abound, there's a concurrent attitude of adventurousness, heard in the impatient, self-interrupting phrases, trembling ornaments and generally dramatic disposition. The upshot is a satisfying blend of refined craftsmanship and exuberant delivery—at times bordering on garrulity. Reed is equally poised between self-discipline and passion, treading that line without losing his balance or sense of direction.

For more info, visit smokesessionsrecords.com. This project is at Smoke Mar. 9-12. See Calendar.



Eye of I
James Brandon Lewis (ANTI-Records)
by Zachary Weg

There is a moment toward the end of James Brandon Lewis' fiery new record, *Eye of I*, where his saxophone convulses like a dying cobra after an adrenaline shot. With its sputtering horns and clashing cymbals, this album is an anguished journey towards paradise, Lewis' saxophone his lodestar.

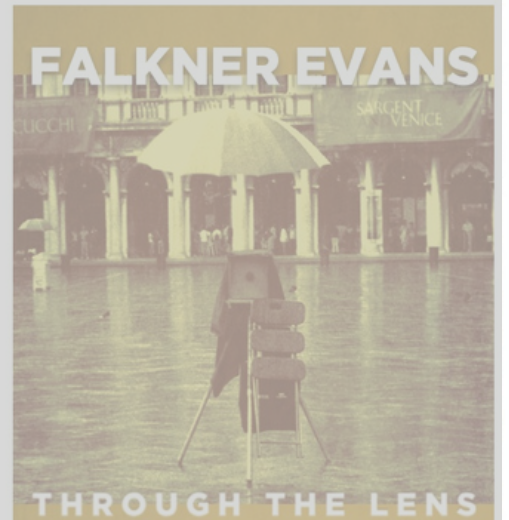
After a frenetic opener, "Foreground", the tenor saxophonist launches into Donny Hathaway's "Someday We'll All Be Free", and all gather at attention. Infusing the track with a punk rock energy alongside Max Jaffe (drums) and Chris Hoffman (cello), Lewis' instrument soars up to seeming infinity. Coltrane certainly comes to mind here, but the rawer sensibility brings a

decidedly 2020s pained beauty to the rest of the album.

"The Blues Still Blossoms", for example, with its drums stammering below the leader's flying saxophone, almost sounds like a lament for modern America. It is the sound of a man who, surveying the chaos of the country, holds out hope and wails for peace. On the title track, his horn fluttering wildly, Lewis turns inward, sounding out his own ennui. A composer with big ideas and an even bigger heart, he turns the song into a threnody for the nation. "We're hurting", he seems to be saying, "but we can get through all of this wreckage."

Pointing the way forward, he then begins "Within You Are Answers" searching for solace, with a tender solo that hints he may have finally found some. Then, however, Jaffe's ramshackle drums come followed by a tense saxophone outro, but Lewis hasn't yet climbed his mountain and seen the view. It is only as *Eye of I* nears completion that Lewis, having blasted his own blues and the country's, attains contentment. His saxophone swirling on "Send Seraphic Beings", he segues into "Even the Sparrow", which, with its blaring horns and almost metal-like melody, dips back into tension. But it's on the closer, "Fear Not (feat. The Messthetics)" where Lewis finally finds jubilation. As his bandmates cause a ruckus, wild strings and guitar fuzz almost halting his flight, the tenor saxophonist wails and wails until the woes fall away.

For more info, visit anti.com. Lewis is at Le Poisson Rouge Mar. 20. See Calendar.



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