

One Sunday
Ken Aldcroft/William Parker (Tr)
by Mark Keresman

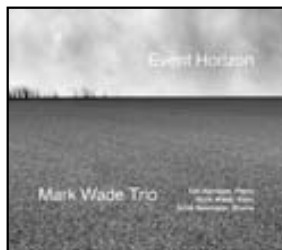
While active in NYC's underground/avant garde jazz circles since the early '70s, it was in the '90s that bassist William Parker became widely known. Aside from his many albums as a leader, Parker's recordings and performances with pianist Matthew Shipp and saxophonists Peter Brötzmann and David S. Ware (as well as indie rockers Yo La Tengo) have garnered him international renown. Not as yet well-known, Canadian guitarist Ken Aldcroft has established himself in the creative jazz scenes of Vancouver and Toronto, performing and recording with the Association of Improvising Musicians Toronto (AIMToronto), electronic duo MiMo and Anthony Braxton.

One Sunday is Aldcroft and Parker in a presumably completely improvised duo context. "Sweet Beverly" is a leisurely, blues-lanced ramble—and "ramble" in the best sense of the word. These gents reconnoiter with and around country blues phrases in a free-form mode yet with implied rhythmic impetus and in a yearningly bittersweet manner. Parker's bass is pliant, played with an exploratory scope yet with plenty of urgent throb and presence. Aldcroft has a brittle, crackling, yet at times crystalline tone and while he plays an electric axe there are virtually no effects or distortion. His approach intertwines the open-ended aspects of Derek Bailey, drive of Fred Frith and earthy countryside twang of Bill Frisell.

"Monroe Street Bop" is sideways freebop, Aldcroft making with some angular but strangely swinging phrases and some earnestly swinging Parker. "Warm'in On McKibben" finds Parker on shakuhachi (Japanese flute), blowing somewhat mournfully and freely while Aldcroft plucks away with merry, pointed abandon, evoking slightly the more impressionistic aspects of the free improvisations of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. The lengthy "One Sunday" is the least satisfying track, as it sounds as if the duo is waiting for the right inspiration to alight—it meanders while the other pieces have a more visceral, immediate tenor yet maintaining a high level of musicianship.

One Sunday is not an album for free jazz novices, but those smitten with and well-versed in the ways of non-idiomatic improvisation will find much to savor.

For more information, visit kenaldcroft.com/triorecords.asp. Parker is at JACK Apr. 9th-11th, Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center Apr. 22nd and 30th and The Stone Apr. 26th. See Calendar.



Event Horizon
Mark Wade Trio (s/t)
by Donald Elfman

The piano trio has long been a popular and creative format. Group interplay and individual resourcefulness are in the open and bassist Mark Wade has met this

challenge with aplomb on his new recording. Wade, pianist Tim Harrison and drummer Scott Neumann draw out the best from each other.

Everyone is in full gear for opener "Jump for Joy". After the effervescent theme, in which all three subtly contribute to the forward motion, Wade jumps in for a solo that is musical and propulsive yet never showy. Neumann and Harrison know just how to punctuate this brief excursion and, as he deftly closes, Harrison enters easily with a sensitive and to-the-point solo and then the trio plays the elements of the theme's riffs as Neumann finds light, mildly explosive bursts with which to fade the tune to a close.

One of the marks of a working ensemble is its ability to feel comfortable in a variety of settings. Wade's sense of balladry is sublime in "Cold Spring", a bittersweet affair with his brief but telling solo creating the mood. Harrison's feature is a model of economy and understanding as is the delicate brushwork by Neumann. The tune feels like a timeless standard.

Harold Arlen's "If I Only Had a Brain" tests the musicians' ability to take on a chestnut. It's in 5/4 and has some slight adjustments in the harmony and the modulation. None of this detracts from the masterfulness of the original tune nor the imaginative way these musicians take on the new challenges. Of note are a lyrical piano solo that easily embraces the alterations, another Wade solo attending to the music and not to itself and, again, Neumann's smart and thoughtful drumming.

Wade combines elements both to tell a story and find the best way to highlight the talents of the players. And that's the mark of a classic piano trio.

For more information, visit markwademusicny.com. This project is at Saint Peter's Apr. 15th. See Calendar.



Keep On Keepin' On (Soundtrack)
Various Artists (Varèse Sarabande)
by Ken Dryden

Clark Terry's passing at the age of 94 on Feb. 21st after a long struggle with complications from diabetes marked the end of an era. A valuable sideman with both Duke Ellington and Count Basie, Terry integrated *The Tonight Show* band, co-led a quintet with valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and directed his own Big B-A-D Band while recording prolifically as a leader and with fellow greats. Terry's mastery of both trumpet and flugelhorn (which included alternating between both horns in a song by playing ambidextrously), immediately recognizable sound on both instruments, skill at sight reading and improvisation and hilarious "Mumbles" vocal routine were matched by his long-time dedication to sharing his knowledge with musicians of all ages, which included a young Quincy Jones back in the late '40s.

Justin Kauflin, a blind pianist who was a semifinalist in the 2011 Thelonious Monk Jazz Piano competition, was one of the last of Terry's students, continuing to study with him on a regular basis in Terry's home as the jazz master's health declined. This soundtrack to the recent documentary of Terry's life mixes recording highlights from various points in his long career—from collaborations with pianist Oscar Peterson and appearances with Ellington to work with the Jazz at the Philharmonic All-Stars and Count Basie Orchestra—and original music by Kauflin, intermingled with excerpts of their late-night

conversations, where the trumpeter shares his knowledge. Terry's affection for his talented pupil is apparent as he encourages him to do his own thing as a musician and to work hard. It's a kick to hear the master singing and scatting "Breeze" for him, with Kauflin playing the tune (via overdubbing). An hour-plus CD barely scratches the surface of Terry's contribution to jazz, but this well-crafted soundtrack covers a great deal of ground. It's a safe bet that any jazz fan who hears it will be moved, whether or not he or she has seen the documentary itself.

For more information, visit varesesarabande.com. Justin Kauflin is at Baruch Performing Arts Center Apr. 2nd. See Calendar.

ON SCREEN



Low Down
Jeff Preiss (Bona Fide Productions)
by Mark Keresman

Movies about jazz performers—or even movies that prominently feature jazz in soundtracks—are somewhat rare, at least in American films. *Low Down* is notable as both, a biography of the life of jazz pianist Joe Albany as seen through the eyes of his teenage daughter Amy Jo Albany in the early '70s.

Based on Amy Jo's book, *Low Down* conveys the parallel stories of a creative parent with a weakness for drugs and his loving daughter's coming of age. Amy (Elle Fanning) is in a phase where, despite her love for her father and respect for his talent, she holds no illusions about him. Out on parole and living in a dive-y hotel, Albany (John Hawkes) is indeed a loving father, doting on his child, yet with little real determination to give up the drugs that got him sent to prison. Sheila Albany (Lena Headey) is Joe's ex-wife and Amy's mother, a foul-mouthed alcoholic singer without much desire to be any meaningful presence in her daughter's life. When Joe is in jail, the hospital or on tour, Amy stays with Gram (Glenn Close), Joe's long-suffering mother, who's supportive of her son and granddaughter.

The movie conveys Joe's dedication to jazz as well as the financial limitations common to some musicians of the period—his synthesis of Bud Powell's skill and the spare angularity of Thelonious Monk wasn't exactly in high demand in the clubs of the time. So despite violating the terms of his parole, Joe takes off for Europe, where work and opportunities to record would be more plentiful, leaving Amy in Gram's care. When he returns—forced to return, again because of drugs—Joe goes back to his old habits while Amy struggles with her growing pains.

If it sounds somewhat depressing, it is—Joe Albany is a likable sort, but does what he feels the need to do with little thought of consequences to himself or those around him. Director Jeff Preiss' style is straightforward and unfussy, almost documentary-like, and the music is excellent—Albany's recordings, pop songs from the period and an original soundtrack by saxophonist Ohad Talmor. But two things shine through: the love for music of the characters and the filmmakers and the palpably excellent acting, making this a film worth watching.

For more information, visit epochfilms.com/directors/jeff-preiss