

Gaia
Lionel Loueke (Blue Note)
by Tom Greenland

Benin-born guitarist Lionel Loueke is one of the most exciting new voices on jazz guitar, a finger-picker who combines deep feeling for pulse and intuitive phrasing with cutting-edge approaches to rhythm and melody. On *Gaia*, his eighth outing as a leader, he regroups with two colleagues from his student days at Berklee College of Music, bassist Massimo Biolcati and drummer Ferenc Nemeth, for an unadulterated set (i.e., live studio audience, no overdubs) of originals.

"Broken", the opener, immediately sets the tone for the rest of the date, with a robotic guitar sound and a complicated yet flowing rhythmic structure over an earthy riff, sounding grounded and extraterrestrial all at the same time. On many of his compositions, Loueke takes a symmetrical structure and slightly shortens or lengthens the final phrase by a pulse. For example, "Aziza" dances along with a 4+4+4+5 beat grouping while the funky "Veuve Malienne" is grouped 4+4+4+3. In hands less competent than Biolcati and Nemeth's these long-form rhythmic phrases would limp and stutter, but here they flow seamlessly.

Loueke's guitar style is biting, not lush, with terse chords and stabbing lines, his improvised lines often hewing to a modal tone center, but full of surprises as well, as when they slip outside the harmonies. He reveals a blues-rock edge on several tracks: "Wacko Loco", "Even Teens" and especially "Procession" (phrased 4+5+5+5), turning up the distortion and pedaling the wah-wah à la Cream-era Eric Clapton. His softer sentiments come out on "Sources of Love", where he fleshes out the melodic line with just the right amount of chordal accompaniment; "Rain Wash", which opens pensively, becoming more definitive in the middle; and a cover of The Bee Gees' "How Deep Is Your Love", reimagined as a typically asymmetrical (4+4+4+3) but infectiously festive samba send-up. The title track pulls together all of his best qualities: graceful ornamentation, deft touches, liquid phrasing and unpredictability, all over a bedrock groove.

For more information, visit bluenote.com. This project is at Jazz Standard Dec. 8th-9th. See Calendar.



Restive Soul
Kyle Nasser (Aisa)
Vol. 01
Beekman (Discos Pendiente)
by Donald Elfman

Kyle Nasser, saxophonist and composer, is intelligent and soulful, has a sense of freedom yet understands the concept of structure and is a leader with a finely tuned sense of organization and order. The two albums featured here present all of these facets and transcend them to make vital new music.

Restive Soul is a quintet showcase for which Nasser composed challenging but appealing music. "For Rick B." is a perfect illustration of the way Nasser thinks

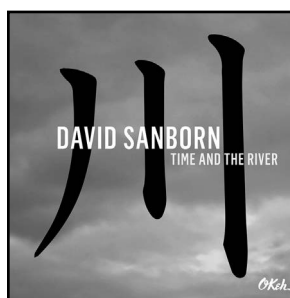
and writes: a tribute to a teacher who passed away, it's a deeply felt work that is uptempo and positive with a spirit that all can dig into. The theme is stated by Nasser on tenor and guitarist Jeff Miles, but the rhythm section of Dov Manski (piano), Chris Van Voorst Van Beest (bass) and Devin Drobka (drums) anchor the tune with propulsive rhythm and keen phrases. Nasser solos fervently as does Miles, making good use of the electricity coming through his instrument.

The tunes are diverse and expressive of the album's title. "Angelique" is a gorgeous and dreamy ballad with the leader again on tenor. The title tune has a rock-like sensibility with Miles in a heavy groove and Drobka and Van Voorst Van Beest pushing the band forward. "Shadow Army" and "Radiator Lady" are both dark and pictorial, with the latter at a faster tempo and both having tenor, guitar and piano playing attractive melodies. This is a well-seasoned group, with each member contributing to the soundscape.

Beekman is a collective group of Nasser and three international players. The tunes on *Vol. 01* are richly eclectic and satisfying, reflecting the players' backgrounds and a sense of group adventure and musical and personal harmony. Nasser plays mostly soprano saxophone and pianist Yago Vázquez is found exclusively on Rhodes keyboard, both offering finely drawn colors. The latter contributes the opener, the quietly haunting "Mirrors", Rhodes providing the intro vamp and then Nasser and Vázquez playing the inviting and mysterious melody. Nasser's "Sticky Hipster" is up next and it's another enigmatic melody, played on deep-throated tenor, with drummer Rodrigo Recabarren doing a quiet rockish shuffle and Vázquez delivering an elegant and bittersweet complement.

Each of the musicians demonstrates compositional prowess and group ethos. Recabarren's boppish "Tamborcitos y Huevaditas" flies by with free-form grace while bassist Pablo Menares' "Lem" is an intimate ballad. And Nasser, Vázquez and Recabarren each offer additional tunes—delicately shaded works with feeling, gracious pacing and expressive playing.

For more information, visit kylenasser.com and discospendiente.com. Nasser's quintet is at Cornelia Street Café Dec. 8th. See Calendar.



Time and the River
David Sanborn (Okeh)
by Terrell Holmes

Alto saxophone icon David Sanborn has endured over the years with his distinctive and popular style, applying his skyscraping range expertly to every project. He steps into his seventh decade with *Time and the River*, an album that proves he has lost none of his energy or passion and is still among the best in the business.

The great band that Sanborn has behind him includes a dynamite heartbeat composed of drummer Marcus Baylor, percussionist Javier Diaz and nonpareil bassist Marcus Miller, who also produced the album. They lead the way on Sylvain Luc-Alice Soyer's pulsating "A La Verticale", clearing the path for one of the typically vigorous solos that have defined Sanborn's career. The reflective and mysterious "Ordinary People" (by Sanborn, not John Legend) has fine underscoring on Hammond organ by Ricky Peterson and the slight roughness around the edges of Sanborn's tone suits the tune perfectly. Roy Assaf's

keyboards and Miller's sighing bass support Sanborn wonderfully on the excellent Sanborn original "Drift"; oddly, though, Sanborn's entry after the dreamy intro seems so abrupt it's almost as though he's intruding. Singer Larry Braggs, of Tower of Power fame, leads the band's cover of "I Can't Get Next to You". There's a nod to The Temptations toward the end but the song faithfully references Al Green's version, thus making it more Memphis than Motown. Sanborn's lines laughingly mock Braggs' dilemma, embodying the siren he will never get.

The sensual march of Alice Soyer's "Oublie Moi" and "Seven Days, Seven Nights", penned by Miller, are exceptional because they're well-spaced and have added color and texture, specifically from Peter Hess' excellent work on soprano and tenor saxophones and bass clarinet. In the same vein, Randy Crawford's caressing vocals are a perfect match for the lyrical opulence of Alan Bergman-Marilyn Bergman-Michel Legrand's "The Windmills of Your Mind". Sanborn cooks up a faithful version of D'Angelo's silky "Spanish Joint" and things end on a nicely rendered, if somber, note with a duet between Sanborn and Assaf on David Amram's theme from *The Manchurian Candidate*.

Some of the fade-outs are a little frustrating, especially after Nicky Moroch's blistering guitar solo on "A La Verticale", because one would like to hear what's on the other side of those fading vamps. That caveat aside, Sanborn still plays with the bright-eyed enthusiasm of someone who's just starting out and *Time and the River* not only confirms his status in jazz but serves notice to Father Time that he has a fight on his hands.

For more information, visit okeh-records.com. Sanborn is at Blue Note Dec. 8th-13th. See Calendar.



VTY Jazz
creating the best jazz experience on Earth

Is Proud To Announce Another Sunday Serenade

Dedicated To Charlie Parker "Bird & Strings"

Mark Gross Quartet + String Quartet
Mark Gross: Alto Saxophone
Theo Hill: Piano
Kenny Davis: Bass
Carl Allen: Drums

***Live from The West End Lounge*
 Sunday, December 20th, 4-7 pm
 \$25 with one drink minimum**

The West End Lounge
955 West End Avenue @ W. 107th Street
Reservation Hotline: 917-882-9539
Sunday Street Parking No Meters
Food & Beverages Are Available

vtyjazz.com