

**Noah Kaplan
Quartet**
Cluster Swerve
HATOLOGY 716
★★★★★

Saxophonist Noah Kaplan studied under the microtonal improviser Joe Maneri at the New England Conservatory of Music, and on Kaplan's latest quartet album, he extends the legacy of his mentor.



From track to track there is a consistent sense of rumination, where every intervallic brushstroke feels like the work of a painter meticulously applying and manipulating his medium to the canvas. But that movement comes within a matrix of lines sculpted by his ensemble, which achieves a sublime level of interaction. Guitarist Joe Morris—another of Kaplan's early teachers and a collaborator of Maneri—is an excellent partner on the frontline, his considered lines and clear tones forming ornate contrapuntal constellations with the saxophonist's grainy patterns.

At times, such as on the opening tune "Clinamen," the agile rhythm section of electric bassist Giacomina Meregá and drummer Jason Nazary feels almost weightless, a slowly rippling organism of liquid tones and delicate cymbal patter, but on "Entzauberung" they exert a much stronger presence, with Meregá unspooling ropey yet elastic lines of palpable physicality.

—Peter Margasak

Cluster Swerve: Clinamen; Entzauberung; Body And Soul; SpheX; Virago (blues); Exheaval. (57:59)
Personnel: Noah Kaplan, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Joe Morris, guitar; Giacomina Meregá, bass; Jason Nazary, drums, electronics.

Ordering info: hathut.com

Nicki Parrott
Dear Blossom
ARBORS JAZZ
★★★★★

Australian bassist-vocalist Nicki Parrott is no stranger to performing with jazz giants. As an up-and-coming artist on the scene, she studied with trailblazers of her instrument such as Ray Brown and John Clayton. An apprenticeship with bass stalwart Rufus Reid soon followed. Then, with her career surging, she was tapped by none other than Les Paul to perform in his regular Monday-night session at Iridium.



For her latest album, Parrott engages with a vocal legend of jazz past: Blossom Dearie. It's a tribute of sparkling endearment and somber reverence, with moods that alternate between smoke and sunshine. A sprightly, bossa-infused "I Wish You Love" launches the disc with levity and grace, while "Devil And The Deep Blue Sea," "Rhode Island Is Famous For You" and "I'm Hip" (with modern references to Twitter and Instagram) entrench it firmly in swing. Meanwhile, "I Walk A Little Faster" and "Dear Blossom" are elegant turns through balladry, and render Parrott's sweet, amiable voice with pronounced clarity and splendor.

—Brian Zimmerman

Dear Blossom: I Wish You Love; Everything I've Got Belongs To You; I Walk A Little Easier; Peel Me A Grape; Devil And The Deep Blue Sea; Dear Blossom; I'm Hip; Tout Doucement; Try Your Wings; Surrely With The Fringe On Top; Rhode Island Is Famous For You; It Amazes Me; It Might As Well Be Spring. (58:00)

Personnel: Nicki Parrott, vocals, bass; Chris Grasso, piano; Chuck Redd, vibes; Lenny Robinson, drums; Warren Vache, cornet; Engelbert Wrobel, clarinet; tenor saxophone; Vince Cherico, percussion.

Ordering info: arborsrecords.com

Tal Cohen
Gentle Giants
INNER CIRCLE MUSIC 071
★★★★★

Pianist Tal Cohen grew up in Israel, moved to Australia when he was 16 and began to travel extensively in 2010. He made his recording debut as a leader in 2011 with *Yellow Sticker* and gained experience working with saxophonists George Garzone and Joe Lovano. While Cohen's music reflects his classical background and his roots in Jewish folk, it mostly falls into the modern jazz mainstream.



Gentle Giants begins with "Nardis," which is given a subtle bass groove by Hurst. This quiet version, taken at a slower tempo, builds up gradually. "Great PK (For Shuli)," which is named after a dog, has a playful theme and is highlighted by a particularly strong solo from Cohen. The ballad "Ducks" evolves through several moods during its nine minutes, from dramatic to childlike, and including both freer moments and straight-ahead swing. Of the other pieces, "The Gentle Giant" is a ballad for the trio, "Legacy" is a moody outing with tenor saxophonist Jamie Oehlers, "Gavetsch" heads in several directions at once and "Chopin Meets Abach" is quietly brooding. Throughout *Gentle Giants*, the musicians uplift this post-bop material, creating music that is always stimulating.

—Scott Yanow

Gentle Giants: Nardis; Great PK (For Shuli); Ducks; Lo Haya Part 1; Lo Haya Part 2; Hazil Magil (Gavetsch Reprise); The Gentle Giant; Legacy; Gavetsch; Chopin Meets Abach. (63:04)

Personnel: Tal Cohen, piano; Greg Osby, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone; Jamie Oehlers, tenor saxophone; Robert Hurst, bass; Nate Winn, drums.

Ordering info: innercirclemusic.com

**Irvin Mayfield &
The New Orleans
Jazz Orchestra**
Live At Newport
BASIN STREET
★★★★★

Irvin Mayfield leads his veteran jazz orchestra through a high-energy musical charge on his latest disc, a live set from the Newport Jazz Festival recorded in August 2015.



Raw, honest and emotional, it's the second live album from Mayfield and his orchestra in two years, following the release of *New Orleans Jazz Playhouse* in 2015. That album, which featured several small ensembles, painted the trumpeter in mellow, intimate tones. In contrast, *Live At Newport* is all about outsized presence and sound.

Festive as this album is—"We're making history!" Mayfield exclaims at the beginning of the set—it's not without moments of great import and seriousness. "Angola," with its chest-thumping minor shuffle, is a song about prison reform, and "May His Soul Rest In Peace" was written by Mayfield in tribute to his father, who was a victim of Hurricane Katrina. It is a solemn, personal testament to the strength of New Orleans' black community in the wake of great tragedy.

—Brian Zimmerman

Live At Newport: Tune Up (Rising Tide); The Elder Negro Speaks; Angola; Yesterday; I've Got The World On A String; Sweet Bread On The Levees; Overjoyed; Indians; May His Soul Rest In Peace; We Will Rock You/ Joe Avery Blues. (67:58)

Personnel: Irvin Mayfield, trumpet, director; Barney Floyd, Leon "Kid Chocolate" Brown, Ashlin Parker, Glenn Hall, trumpets; Victor "Red" Atkins, piano; Jason Weaver, bass; Carl LeBlanc, guitar, banjo; Adonis Rose, drums; Khari Allen Lee, Jeronne Amari Ansari, Ricardo Pascal, Edward Petersen, Jason Marshall, saxophones; Michael Watson, David L. Harris, Emily Fredrickson, trombones.

Ordering info: basinstreetrecords.com