

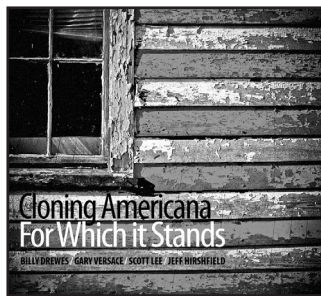
My Brother
Gary Hassay/Michael Bisio (Konnex)
by John Sharpe

Comprising 11 free duets between reedman Gary Hassay and bassist Michael Bisio, *My Brother* preaches straightforward honest communication. It's a familiar format for both men: the saxist has previously kept company with bassist Paul Rogers while Bisio etched a series of discs with multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee.

Virtuosity in the main stems from the bassist, who often provides counterpoint and commentary simultaneously. His responses and choices are those of a master technician; he gives each note unique shading and inflection and, especially with bow in hand, he conjures rich harmonics and deep warming resonance. But it is not an unequal partnership: the hornman's lucid and meditatively calm lines drift over, under and through the bassman's thickets to pleasing effect. He spins abstract, yet melodic statements, largely in the middle register, with occasional shout-outs in the extremes. But don't peg him as one-dimensional. On occasion his split tones fray to match Bisio's arco while his animated distortions and overblowing add contrast on "For Billy And Paula" and "All That I Hear Is Going Through Me". Elsewhere, on the light airy "Never Surrender", his stuttering alto brings to mind sunlit clouds drifting over a darkened landscape.

At best a sublime interweaving of alto saxophone and bass sonorities grabs the ears; witness "Prayer For Sendai", Hassay's alto both echoing and supporting the rich bow work. Bisio rises well to the challenge of whatever his partner throws at him, including his wordless throat singing on two cuts, which may prove an acquired taste for some. He matches the vocal overtones with sawing creaks and drones, almost creating a third voice from the confluence of the wavering pitches. While it's worth noting that the only steady riff surfaces on the concluding "House Of Ormai", where a rippling pizzicato figure sporadically underpins Hassay's thoughtful exposition, this set nonetheless makes for a compelling listen.

For more information, visit konnex-records.de. Bisio is at *The Firehouse Space Dec. 3rd*, *The Moldy Fig Dec. 10th* with Stephen Gauci and *Gershwin Hotel Dec. 22nd* with Bob Gluck. See *Calendar*.



For Which it Stands
Cloning Americana (Sunnyside)
by Sharon Mizrahi

Cloning Americana's tender melodies and crystal-clear sound give little allusion to the charged undercurrent coursing through *For Which it Stands*. Though tinged with romantic undertones, the quartet's debut album presents somewhat of a rarity in jazz: political outcry, albeit in subtle form. Saxist Billy Drewes, pianist Gary Versace, bassist Scott Lee and drummer Jeff Hirshfield lie at the core of this enlivening but puzzling work. With the tactful touch of classic jazz and a simmering hint of edginess, these established musicians craft an album at once effortlessly charming and heavy with nostalgia for the America of decades past.

Drewes' smooth sax opener in "The Lament" beckons to the ear like a brassy magnet, growing to the point of majestic harmony against Versace's wistful touches of piano. But beneath their harmonic mingling lies a quietly profound introspection. Drewes' polished exterior darkens into rasp-tinged hollowness. Versace's fluidity suddenly turns to heart-heavy sparseness. "Of Two Minds" further illustrates the dichotomy between playful ease and solemnity in simple but remarkable form. Lee's opening bowed bass solo takes the piece into richly pensive, somber resonance - soon to melt into a wisp of Hirshfield's drums and a surprisingly florid sax-piano union. Lee's melancholy twist, though curtly cut short, never quite dissolves, instead subliminally trickling into the heart of each tune on the album. Versace absorbs the bulk of Lee's introspective mood in "Old Dirt", a solo track that embodies musical sadness to wrenching, nearly heartbreaking perfection. Versace's solo is forlorn bliss, gingerly seeping into every alcove of the soul and spirit.

The politics that Cloning Americana brews throughout the track list comes to full-fledged realization in "For Which It Stands, Part 2". Against Versace's aptly sparse piano chords, Drewes puts his saxophone aside in favor of low and humble vocals, gently asking "Is this the way that things used to be in our country?" In just over one-and-a-half minutes, he explores fears and hopes for the American nation, radiating the modest heartache of a piercing lullaby.

Despite Drewes' powerful wisdom, there lies an

inherent elusiveness to this elegant and often delicate album. But such elegance and understatement may be more revolutionary than wildly flaring saxophones and blaring drum rhythms. From the humble midst of Cloning Americana's heart-reaching music, there emerges a new kind of political statement: the art of action by reflection. Perhaps the last words heard on *For Which it Stands* hold the true weight of this enigmatic and fiercely poignant album: "we are all one".

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com. Billy Drewes is at *Village Vanguard Mondays* with *Vanguard Jazz Orchestra*. See *Regular Engagements*.

ON DVD



Zoot Sims

IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD

In A Sentimental Mood
Zoot Sims (Gazell Film)
by Ken Dryden

Zoot Sims had a productive career that lasted over four decades, working in bands led by Benny Goodman, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton and Gerry Mulligan, though for much of his career he played as a single or with fellow tenor saxophonist Al Cohn. Sims' smooth, warm tone was more along the lines of Lester Young, one of his personal heroes, and he never failed to swing. This DVD, previously issued both on CD and VHS, is his final recording prior to his death from cancer in 1985. It is a relaxed trio session in the library of the Sonet label's headquarters in Sweden with bassist Red Mitchell (then living abroad) and guitarist Rune Gustafsson, with whom Sims had previously appeared on the Pablo LP *The Sweetest Sounds* a few years earlier.

Each performance is preceded by an excerpt of a friendly conversation between Mitchell (serving as interviewer) and Sims, who tells funny stories about how Benny Goodman stole and ate his apple during a record date as the clarinetist encouraged him to continue to solo and how his discouragement after a lackluster solo led to kicking his horn downstairs after a gig. The only problem with the interview excerpts is that the editor overlaps the audio with the introduction to each song.

The performances sound like a gathering of old friends playing for their own enjoyment at home with an audience of one. Sims caresses the melody of "In a Sentimental Mood", adding minor embellishments in his solo, followed by Mitchell's enjoyable half-chorus. "Gone With the Wind" is a bit more breezy, an extended performance with Sims taking a few more liberties with the theme and two potent choruses by Gustafsson. The upbeat spirit of the trio's setting of "Sweet Lorraine" suggests a stroll on a pretty spring day, with potent solos all around. Only during "'Tis Autumn" is there any sheet music visible, yet there is nothing labored about the trio's interpretation. The least familiar piece is Sims' own "Castle Blues", a salute to a Stockholm hotel and a percolating blowing vehicle. The audio is excellent, the camera angles and editing are first-rate and the source video has not suffered from the ravages of time.

For more information, visit mvd2b.com



Junior Mance

...Jazz pianist
Hidé Tanaka...Bassist
at
Café Loup
EVERY SUNDAY
6:30 - 9:30 pm

Junior Mance
Quintet
first Sunday
of each month

NO COVER, JUST AWARD
WINNING JAZZ AND FOOD
105 West 13th Street 212-255-4746

www.juniormance.com



KATE SMITH PROMOTIONS
OF CHICAGO SENDS
LIGHT & LOVE TO OUR
JAZZ WORLD FAMILY THIS
HOLIDAY SEASON, ALONG
WITH GREAT APPRECIATION
TO THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ
RECORD FOR MANY YEARS
OF EXCELLENT CD REVIEWS
AND TOURING GIG SUPPORT!

KATESMITHPROMOTIONS.COM