

D-Day
Monty Alexander (MVD Entertainment)
 by Marilyn Lester

On the auspicious day of June 6, 1944, two significant events happened an ocean apart. The greater of these was the World War II Allied invasion of German-held France, the Normandy landing of D-Day. The other event was the birth of Montgomery Alexander in Jamaica, West Indies, the musician who would go on to international fame as a jazz pianist. In homage to the battle that brought World War II to its close, Alexander has released *D-Day*, with a dozen tracks of mostly originals. The short spoken intro by the pianist espouses that now "everywhere is war."

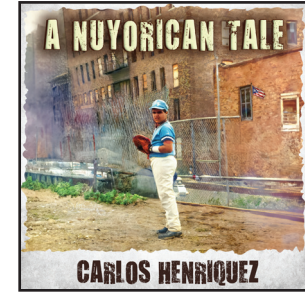
The first musical track "I'll Never Smile Again" (Ruth Lowe) begins with pathos; Alexander's playing then widens to pick up the pace, delivered in his embellished, Art Tatum-esque style. Curiously it ends with a kind of cowboy-riding-the-trail feeling, with drummer Jason Brown applying sticks like hoof beats. The irony of a smile is also captured in Charlie Chaplin's 1936 "Smile". Although lyrics were set later, in 1954,

the sentiment of them, "Smile, though your heart is aching," comes through. Alexander's brisk and light interpretation manages to exude a measure of hope with a forward-pulsing energy.

His style as a player is heavy on harmonic and rhythmic intensity; "Aggression" is a fierce statement of that ethos, and a pointed pianistic comment on militant pugnacity. With defining backing statements from bassist Luke Sellick and Brown, the power of music to agitate is clearly demonstrated. In contrast, Alexander's "River of Peace" is a gentle, flowing tune that finds his trickling notes delivered as healing waters. The jubilation of peace is reflected in "V.E. Swing", the pianist's ode to the Swing era with glissandi and other happy-making embellishments in its jaunty dance party tempo. A bass feature allows Sellick to joyously stretch out. The penultimate track, "D-DayVoices", threads Alexander's statements on war and peace with various vintage radio clips. Underscored throughout by the trio, the piece ends with his statement, "we don't need no more trouble." The album closer is the traditional "Day-o", recorded live, with Alexander vocally leading the audience. A full band and calypso beat showcase a number full of joy, happiness and solidarity.

As a musical statement, a tone poem about war and peace, what better way to end *D-Day* than with a living example of how the world can be when people gather together to, paraphrasing that old '60s chestnut, make love not war.

For more info visit mvdshop.com. Alexander's 80th birthday album release concerts are at Birdland May 28 - Jun. 1. See Calendar.



A Nuyorican Tale
Carlos Henriquez (s/r)
 by Russ Musto

Following in the tradition of his previous effort, *The South Bronx Story*, on this, his fourth album as a leader, longtime Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra bassist Carlos Henriquez presents a diverse program that proudly pays homage to his pedigree as a New York native of Puerto Rican ancestry. While the prior release focused on the bassist's personal history and experience growing up, *A Nuyorican Tale* conveys the overall Nuyorican experience and complex history of families who migrated to New York City and the South Bronx from Puerto Rico.

The album features nine original pieces on which he clearly demonstrates his formidable abilities, not just as a virtuoso instrumentalist, but also as an accomplished bandleader and capable composer. The date features the bassist's working nonet (which perennially holds down the fort at Dizzy's Club during New Year's Eve week): Jeremy Bosch (flute, vocals), Michael Rodriguez and Terell Stafford (trumpets), Marshall Gilkes (trombone), Melissa Aldana (tenor), Robert Rodriguez (piano, Fender

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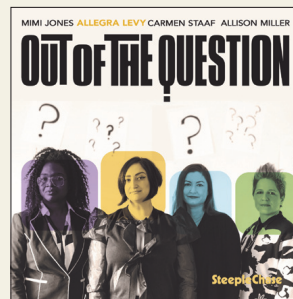
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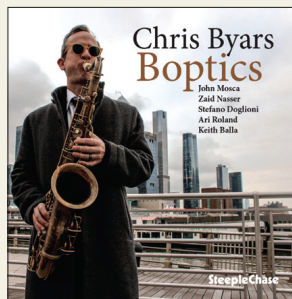
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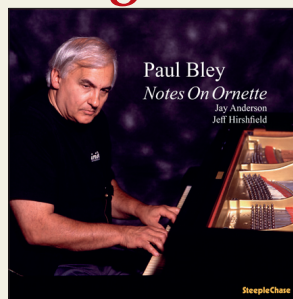


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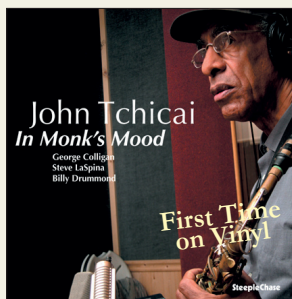
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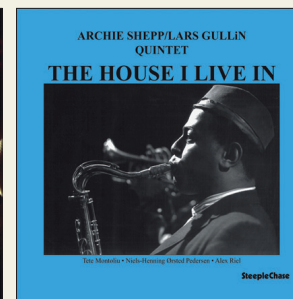
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