

Ted Morcaldi Celestial Stranger

Clonmell Jazz Social CJS007

(CD, DL) ★★½

Ted Morcaldi (g, syn), Joel Humann (b), Joshua Blackmore (d) with Tim Lefebvre (b).
Rec. date not stated



Sometimes we need a stranger to our own shores to remind us what a privileged isle we are. Morcaldi is an American now resident in the fenlands of England. He's evidently influenced by those flat, mysterious wetlands. 'Elyesque' is a multi-tracked guitar meditation inspired by Ely's cathedral. 'Eel Catcher' has a watery connection as its enigmatic theme hovers above thrumming bottom strings. There's also an intimation of synthed effects lying beneath which resonates with Morcaldi's love for Jon Hassell and Can's Holger Czukay. This is most evident on 'Time Window', which has that night sleeper rhythm of a trans-European express so beloved of Hassell.

As may be gathered, Morcaldi paints from a wide palette: 'Pealing Bells' harnesses the chimes of a 12-string to evoke the tintinnabulation which is such a feature of the English aural landscape.

There are echoes of course of Metheny – who likewise revels in plains and wide skies – but Morcaldi references rather than copies. There are shades too of Abercrombie in ECM days, but Morcaldi's voice also eases through, like a narrowboat nosing through marshy reeds. Thoughtful, considered, and a talent to catch.

Andy Robson

Możdzer Danielsson Fresco

ACT Music 9065 (CD, 2 LP, DL) ★★

Leszek Możdzer (p), Lars Danielsson (b, clo, viola da gamba) and Zohar Fresco (d, perc, v).
Rec. 18-22 September 2023



A very promising opening to the opening track – moody, atmospheric – leads into more of the same, a repeated unison bass and piano riff, despite the ear yearning for a chord change, a suggestion of harmonic movement, it remains stuck in a groove – albeit an effective one – but fails to make the most of a good thing. 'Cattusella,' with its Bach-like

interweaving of independent melody lines between piano and bass, and 'Beamo' follow in similar mood, sprinkled with gently tinkling arabesques in the seventh and eighth octaves of the piano.

A sense of momentum is generated with 'Linkability' where Możdzer allows a glimpse of the keyboard prowess that is associated with his name, but recedes in the face of a Danielsson bass solo. All is well executed, of course, with musicians of the stature of Możdzer and Danielsson but pieces by the pianist such as 'Gilado' lack compositional ambition, seldom reaching out to fully engage the listener, rather glide over the surface of their emotions. Even music in the spirit of jazz needs a bit of a kick, but the spirit here is alcohol-free.

Stuart Nicholson

Manon Mullener Stories

Self-release/Bandcamp

(CD, DL) ★★★★★

Manon Mullener (p), Lucien Mullener (d), Dean Torrey (b), Edgar Martinez Ochoa (perc), Victor Decamp (tb), Samuel Urscheler (s), plus guests Lau Noah (g, v), Camila Meza (g) and Rachel Therrien (t).
Rec. date not stated



Manon Mullener is a rising star Swiss pianist who recently impressed all who saw her at Jazzahead! in Bremen. Armed with a sound that incorporates jazz, Latin, Afro-Cuban elements, nods to Mexico and Peru with the folk melodies of her homeland, her original compositions come invested with energy, groove and an innovative intimacy; this third album follows last year's lauded *Insomnia*, a collaboration with like-minded young jazz guns, and her 2019 debut, as a piano duo with Cesar Correa and David Stauffacher on percussion.

Accompanied by an illustrated booklet fleshing out the narratives and people that inspired the tracks – some of which are preceded with intros recorded by Manon as she's toured the world – *Stories* is precisely that, a sort of travel diary in which keyboard runs and exuberant ostinatos meet pulsing congas and slaloming horns. Highlights include 'Xchel', a leftfield dive into Mayan culture as piqued by an encounter with an elder, Exaltación Noh, whose field recorded voice tells, in Spanish, of pain, life and the moon. Each



piece wears its influences like a finely stitched quilt ('Nostalgia' is foregrounded by a musing on a Manhattan way of life long gone); together, they celebrate human resilience, and the power of music to articulate meaning. Recommended. Jane Cornwell

Amina Claudine Myers Solace Of The Mind

Red Hook REHO 1764971 (CD, LP, DL)

★★★★

Amina Claudine Myers (p, org, v).

Rec. 29024



There has been a recent renewal of interest in veteran pianist-organist-vocalist Amina Claudine Myers following *Central Park's Mosaic Of Reservoir, Lake, Paths And Gardens*, her excellent 2024 collaboration with trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith. Myers has recorded many fine works under her own name (with a wide variety of groups) during a six decade career and this new solo album has as much gravitas and beauty as one might expect from such an experienced artist. Ten relatively short pieces provide an object lesson in how to use a laser-like focus to draw the listener in to a compelling sound world. While her blues and gospel vocabulary is prominent in the compositions, Myers astutely inflects the melodic distinctions of those two entwined traditions to daring new places.

At times she conspires to play what sound like original hymns, slightly reminiscent of Mal Waldron and Aretha Franklin (at the piano rather than on the mic), but Myers

is minded to match the deeply emotive themes with structural whimsy. On 'Sensuous' she breaks the melody with unforeseen chord progressions and strips harmony down to an insistent pedal point, or a single swaying tremolo riff to make the music as sparse and open as it is rich and lyrical. Then again, the blend of her meditative spoken word and simmering, entrancing organ chords on 'Ode To My Ancestors' is also remarkable. Myers has always shown the fluidity of the borders between avant-garde and folk traditions in African-American music, and this imperious album proves that the sprightly octogenarian has lost none of the verve and vigour of her earlier years. Kevin Le Gendre

Ofri Nehemya Time Traveler

Adhyaropa Records AR00113

(CD, DL) ★★½

Ofri Nehemya (d, comp), Nitzan Bar (g), Tomer Bar (p, ky) and Tal Mashiach (b).
Rec. date not stated



Nehemya is a prodigiously talented young Israeli drummer, now based in New York, and this debut album establishes him as another addition to the roster of Israeli jazz superstars making waves on the NYC scene and across the world. He's played with Omer Avital, Ben Wendel, Eli Degibri, Aaron Goldberg, Gilad Hekselman, Yotam Silberstein, both Avishai Cohens, and has enjoyed a long association with Shai Maestro, recording on two of his ECM albums.

This raises expectations somewhat, and these expectations