



Recurring Dream
Mike McGinnis (Sunnyside)
by Elliott Simon

Pianist Art Lande begins this release from clarinetist Mike McGinnis by laying down the mechanistic groove of “Mel’s Drive In”. A few seconds later, bassist Steve Swallow sneaks in to add weight to Lande’s repetitive rhythm. As the foundation solidifies, McGinnis’ soprano saxophone begins simply, but grows in complexity. Lande cleverly handles this evolution as the listener settles in. So begins the realization of *Recurring Dream*, a project in the works for a decade.

“Circle Dance”, the short second track, spotlights McGinnis’ beautiful round tone across the clarinet’s chalumeau to altissimo registers. While the clarinet leads, Lande again makes for a worthy dance partner. “The Rising”, adapted from a McGinnis clarinet concerto (*Road*Trip*, RKM Music, 2013), shines as a relaxed piece with its irregular form suggesting improvisation. “Hearth”, written by McGinnis specifically for this trio, is bluesy yet pretty and evokes a lazy afternoon at home.

In addition to McGinnis’ compositions, both Swallow and Lande add their own tunes to the mix. “Constantinople” is a vehicle for Lande to lead and showcase his touch while “Bend over Backwards”, a Swallow tune, opens with the bassist setting the course with a heavy texture that sets it apart from the rest of the session. “Amazing”, again from Swallow, initially evokes a traditional folk ballad but loses its innocence as the clarinet takes over the melody and adds dynamic contrasts. Those familiar with “Darn that Dream” will recognize hints of the ballad in closer “Drat Recurring Dream”, but these are only jumping-off points for extended harmonic and rhythmic explorations. So ends *Recurring Dream*, a tapestry of differing feelings and images, sometimes soft and sweet, other times with an edgy bite, but always enjoyable.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com. This project is at *Jazz Standard* Apr. 12th. See Calendar.



Walk Against Wind
Linda Oh (Biophilia)
by David R. Adler

The very first sound on *Walk Against Wind*, bassist Linda Oh’s fourth album as a leader, is her sinewy upright bass in a steady pulsing rhythm. Quickly, guitarist Matthew Stevens and drummer Justin Brown (on brushes) join her to trace the contours of the tune, titled “Lucid Lullaby”. Tenor saxophonist Ben Wendel enters to double a lissome melody with Oh before she embarks on the first solo of the rotation. It’s a full-band statement but one with bass in the forefront, not just as a solo voice but as an intriguing structural component in the writing. As an opening track it’s a good window into how this fascinating artist works.

Oh pursued a similar quartet aesthetic with guitar and tenor on her previous album *Sun Pictures*. While

Wendel remains from that lineup, here it’s Stevens in place of James Muller and Brown in place of Ted Poor. They suit the music beautifully, with Stevens favoring a more trebly and overdriven sound. Brown’s complex and elastic take on the beat lends a riveting dynamic tension to the music, especially “Firedancer”; his subtlety with miscellaneous percussion opens other doors as well. Oh plays electric bass on half of the tracks (*Sun Pictures* was wholly acoustic) and sings well-placed wordless melodies on occasion. Pianist/keyboard player Fabian Almazan, from Oh’s earlier *Initial Here* lineup, joins on three tunes while Minji Park plays traditional Korean percussion on “Mantis”.

There are truly startling moments of rhythmic acuity on this recording, none more so than the tightly calibrated accelerations of “Speech Impediment”. On “Mantis” and the title track there’s a similar sense of flux and instability of tempo, a recurring idea that seems to mark a step forward in Oh’s compositional language. “Deepsea Dancers” is another breakthrough of sorts: a meditative, almost chamber-like invention with a simple linear unison melody in an endless loop, passed from instrument to instrument as the band members break off and solo in a round-robin. Again, the tempo takes off in the last minute, to double-time and even a bit beyond. In these and other pieces—the funky “Perpluzzle” and “Ikan Bilis”, the slow and mysterious “Mother Reason”—Oh shows remarkable growth and clarity of vision.

For more information, visit biophilarecords.com. This project is at *Jazz Standard* Apr. 19th. See Calendar.



Project Freedom
Joey DeFrancesco + The People (Mack Avenue)
by Brian Charette

Joey DeFrancesco’s *Project Freedom* is swinging organ music meant as a cure for today’s unsettling political climate. This is immediately apparent when serene prelude “Imagine” is cut short by the raw blues wail of the title track. Jason Brown’s surprise drum solo opens into a brisk minor blues with modern harmonies and tricky metrically modulated tag. Saxophonist Troy Roberts blows first, setting the pace with tight lines, guitarist Dan Wilson turns in a chorus, followed by DeFrancesco. The unusual trading of choruses underpins the thread of surprise that runs throughout the album.

The soulful vibe continues on gospel classic “Lift Every Voice and Sing”. Wilson and DeFrancesco deliver the austere melody with a triplet here or there, foreshadowing the testifying to come later. The leader’s groovy solo is an encyclopedia of organ blues and he jabs the pedals just right to get that organ bump too. We also get to hear DeFrancesco’s deft trumpet on his original “One”. Trumpet and saxophone dance supported by Wilson’s superior fills and a touch of splashy Rhodes by the leader. Brown is a drum bodhisattva with a calm pulse gently kicking the edges of DeFrancesco’s solo. In another surprise, the trumpet enters and solos gracefully over the tag with rhythmically interesting bell and shaker hits from Brown.

“Peace Bridge”, also by DeFrancesco, has gorgeous counter melodies that wrap around Roberts’ velvety tone. The rotating Leslie Speaker gently oscillates between full stop, chorale and the fast setting with a mellow drawbar registration of great subtlety. On his sensitive and spare solo, DeFrancesco displays his unparalleled mastery and control of the organ,

supported beautifully by Wilson’s sharp comping. Also of note on the disc is the Sam Cooke classic “A Change is Gonna Come”, a churchy stomp passing through a rubato middle section until settling into a classic 12/8 blues groove. Wilson’s solo is part funky blues and part searing lines. DeFrancesco follows with a crunchy solo with big foot stomps on the pedals, showing you right where the time is.

DeFrancesco is among the most impressive heirs in the organ lineage and this new quartet release is a must-have for serious Hammond B3 devotees.

For more information, visit mackavenue.com. This project is at *Jazz Standard* Apr. 20th-23rd. See Calendar.

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130 Bands In Five Days: Highlights From Winter Jazzfest NYC 2017
This year's Winter Jazzfest, which took place last week in New York City, presented an explicit theme of "Celebrating Social Justice." Conceptually and musically, Winter Jazzfest pushes the