

**ADAM LARSON**  
*Selective Amnesia*

Adam Larson, tenor saxophone; Matthew Stevens, guitar; Fabian Almazan, piano, Fender Rhodes; Matt Penman, bass; Jimmy Macbride, drums  
Inner Circle INCM 054 (CD). 2015. Ted Tuthill, prod., eng. DDD. TT: 51:58

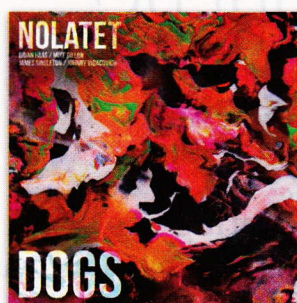
**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★

**SONICS** ★★★★★

A compelling young tenor player on the New York jazz scene, Adam Larson released two albums before coming aboard Greg Osby's Inner Circle label for *Selective Amnesia*. This new outing is as fine a showcase as he could want: all original tunes, a top-tier band, vividly rendered sound recorded at Manhattan's Sear Sound. But strong recordings by young jazz bandleaders are many. Larson takes the extra step, making his case as a refined, imaginative composer whose highly complex ideas retain melodic accessibility and allure. The funky strut and modified blues harmonies of the colorfully named "ShitPay" spring to mind.

Larson's cohorts, including rising-star drummer Jimmy Macbride, bring not only virtuosity but a deep subtlety and seasoning to the material. Guitarist Matthew Stevens emerges as a lead voice alongside Larson, summoning a crisp tone and devouring every tangled unison line Larson can throw at him. The facts that Stevens doesn't solo until track 3, "McWendel," and carries the melody of "Gratitude" by himself the first time through, prove Larson's ability to mix it up in the ensemble and keep the textures fresh.

Bassist Matt Penman, the veteran of the group, begins "Gratitude" unaccompanied, solos with depth and poise in the rhythmically intricate "Disguise," and provides a low-register solidity that makes Larson's writing sparkle. Pianist Fabian Almazan, as accompanist and soloist, is simply aglow. Larson shines consistently on tenor, whether in the grooving tracks or the lyrically swinging "Suitable Replacement" and "Your Loss."—David R. Adler



**NOLATET**  
*Dogs*

The Royal Potato Family RPF 1601 (CD). 2016. Misha Kachkachishvili, prod.; Brian Lucey, mastering. DDD? TT: 30:53

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★

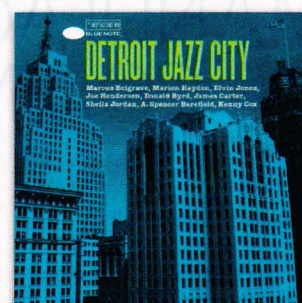
**SONICS** ★★★★★

Traditional jazz in New Orleans is a century old, and still thriving in clubs all over the city. But there's also a vibrant contemporary jazz scene that's not as well known and is much harder to find. Some of the most creative young musicians in the world are interacting in upstairs galleries and small clubs to make music that embraces the spirit of the past as well as the possibilities of the future.

The newest expression of this talent is Nolatet, a chamber jazz quartet that parallels the advances made a generation ago by the Modern Jazz Quartet. The instrumentation is the same—piano, vibraphone, bass, drums—but the conception takes improvisation to another level. Mike Dillon's vibraphone and Brian Haas's piano combine in some beautiful delicate unison themes and variations, particularly the gorgeous album opener, "Pops," a piece of stately quietude that recalls the MJQ's "Skating in Central Park."

The real stars of this outfit, though, are the rhythm section, bassist James Singleton and drummer Johnny Vidacovich. These magnificent players have been a team for some 40 years in one of the city's flagship modern-jazz outfits, Astral Project, and have interacted, together and separately, with all aspects of the city's music, from second lines and Mardi Gras Indian accompaniments to string quartets. Their brilliance can be heard in the challenging "Bongo Joe," a tribute to the legendary street musician and percussionist George Coleman, who was a fixture at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival in its early days.

—John Swenson



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
*Detroit Jazz City*

Nine ensembles with Detroit ties  
Blue Note B002405002 (CD). 1961–2015. Don Was, Francis Wolff, Alfred Lion, Duke Pearson, prods.; Eric Morgeson, unidentified others, engs. AAD/DDD? TT: 69:31

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★

**SONICS** ★★★★★

This record offers a quick education in the 50-year history of a special jazz community. From the long list of badasses who came from Detroit, four are represented here, in tracks from the 1960s: Elvin Jones, Joe Henderson, Donald Byrd, and Kenny Cox. There are five new tracks by players from Detroit, both prominent (James Carter, Sheila Jordan, Marcus Belgrave) and not (Marion Hayden, A. Spencer Barefield).

*Detroit Jazz City* is a benefit album. Proceeds go to a southeastern Michigan organization, Focus: HOPE. It opens with "The Uncrowned King," an anthem both confrontational and elusive. The leader is the propulsive bassist Hayden. Trumpeter Rayse Biggs, tenor saxophonist Vincent Bowens, and alto saxophonist Cassius Richmond all kill. It is pure Detroit hard bop, but in a wilder, looser, new-millennium version. Hayden's rhythm section also backs Carter's ferocious soprano saxophone in "Many Blessings."

"Mode for Joe," from 1966, and "French Spice," from 1961, remind us how compelling Henderson and Byrd were in their primes, and establish a lineage to Bowens and Biggs. The figures who tie it all together are Jordan and Belgrave. They both lived the whole history. Accompanied by Hayden, they make new statements for *Detroit Jazz City*. Jordan, now 87, is strong and clear in her Detroit autobiography, "Sheila's Blues." Belgrave plays heartfelt, hard-nosed trumpet in his ballad "Lottie The Body's Mood." He died at 78, in 2015. This album is dedicated to his memory.

—Thomas Conrad