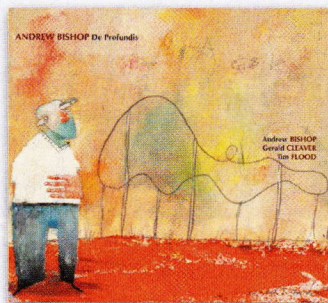


JAZZ


ANDREW BISHOP
De Profundis

Andrew Bishop, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano & tenor saxophones; Tim Flood, bass; Gerald Cleaver, percussion
 Envoi env1501 (CD). 2015. Andrew Bishop, prod.; Jason Corey, eng. DDD? TT: 57:16

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

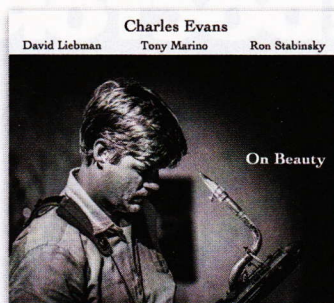
SONICS ★★★★★

Michigan-based multi-reedist Andrew Bishop is best known for his work in bands led by Gerald Cleaver. This helps to explain the elevated rapport of Bishop, Cleaver, and bassist Tim Flood in the marvelous trio session *De Profundis* (From the Depths). The command and inventiveness Bishop displays on five different axes are remarkable.

Inspired in part by Renaissance composer Josquin des Prés, the album begins with Bishop's bass clarinet alone, roughhewn yet sumptuously melodic. The sound is crisp: you can hear keys fluttering under his fingers. Flood and Cleaver join as the music exultantly skirts a tempo, ending in a scored contrapuntal ballad theme for horn and bass. Cleaver's brushes lend the piece a subtle rhythmic outline.

"Introit" is the first of six Josquin-inspired numbers scattered among the disc's 11 tracks: Flute and arco bass coarsely mingle in "Fleeting Light." Tenor sax and bass worry a hypnotic two-note pattern throughout "The Muse." Bass clarinet returns in the punkish, sonically extreme "From the Depths," while "Benedictus" closes the set with a calm and endless mystery.

The five independent pieces reveal extraordinary ranges of technique and expression: from the swinging tenor-sax vehicles "Falling Up" and "Now What?" to the slow-grooving soprano-sax wailer "There Are Many Monkeys" and the flute-focused chamber jazz of "Six Days, Five Nights (for all parents)." Bishop's clarinet feature is "Bottled (self portrait)," with a maze-like form and rhythmic structure, all perfectly executed even in the heat of improvisation. —David R. Adler


CHARLES EVANS
On Beauty

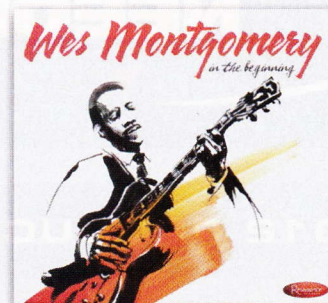
Charles Evans, baritone saxophone; David Liebman, soprano saxophone; Ron Stabinsky, piano; Tony Marino, bass
 More Is More MIM152 (CD). 2015. Charles Evans, prod.; Jim McGee, eng. DDD? TT: 47:38

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

SONICS ★★★★★

When Charles Evans titled an album *The King of All Instruments* (2008), he was referring to the stout, impactful sound of the baritone saxophone. That multitracked solo outing seemed to highlight every capability of the adventurous Evans horn. Yet *Subliminal Leaps* (2013) uncovered a new dimension of Evans's sound. Pairing with his mentor, David Liebman, who played only soprano sax, Evans offered haunting original compositions in a quartet: the two horns, pianist Ron Stabinsky, and longtime Liebman bassist Tony Marino. *On Beauty* is the second release by this excellent drumless lineup.

The language of *On Beauty* is dark, harmonically dense, with a highly porous boundary between the composed and the improvised. Unlike *Leaps*, it unfolds as a single long suite with an introduction, five main movements, two free interludes for duo horns, and a closing statement: "Ending Beauty." There's an abstract, post-tonal quality to the music, meditative ebbing and flowing, but also stretching out, pushing the horns to their sonic limits. The insistent bass line of "Movement II" returns in the suite's closing moments, clear evidence of the structural detail holding the work together. Throughout, composed themes emerge and dissipate, yielding to free interplay full of, by turns, tumult, silence, and space. Evans's and Liebman's horns are far apart in range, but when, more than once in "Movement IV," their playing unites on the same pitch, the effect is startling. The absence of drums makes each player's entrances and exits stand out more dramatically, enhanced by the clean recording. —David R. Adler


WES MONTGOMERY
In the Beginning

Wes Montgomery, guitar, bass; Alonzo "Pookie" Johnson, Gene Morris, tenor sax; Buddy Montgomery, piano, vibes; Jack Coker and others, piano; John Dale and others, bass; Sonny Johnson and others, drums; Debbie Andrews, Sonny Parker, vocals
 Resonance HCD-2014 (2 CDs). 2014. Zev Feldman, Quincy Jones (disc 2, tracks 4-8), prods.; Frank Laico (disc 2, 4-8), eng. AAD. TT: 2:16:23

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

SONICS ★★★★★

Jazz guitar legend Wes Montgomery performed for a decade before cutting his debut album in late 1957. Few of his earlier recordings had been released until producer Zev Feldman patched together this varied collection dating back to 1949. Most of it is from the mid-'50s, recorded for an abortive Epic session produced by Quincy Jones and at live shows in Indianapolis nightclubs. It mostly features the Montgomery-Johnson quintet: Wes and his brothers, Monk and Buddy, and two unrelated Johnsons.

The style is R&B-tinged bebop more akin to the sizzling 1965 club session captured on Wes's *Smokin' at the Half Note* than to his later smooth-jazz and pure-pop studio albums. Montgomery's guitar technique is already brilliant, complete with his signature octave runs and chorded melodies as well as his lightning-quick, thumb-picked single-note lines. The sound quality is at least adequate, with crowd noise enhancing the live ambience of the club dates.

All but one track of disc 1 was recorded at the Turf Club in 1956, mostly with the Montgomery-Johnson band. The red-hot tempos make Wes's virtuosity immediately apparent in the standards "After You've Gone," "Fascinating Rhythm," and "Brazil."

Disc 2 features the tightly controlled five-tune Quincy Jones session from 1955, which does little to showcase Wes as a soloist and three studio tracks from 1949; that swing assuredly while displaying even less of Montgomery's accomplished solo work. —Larry Birnbaum