



Hot Town
Ghost Train Orchestra (Accurate)
by David R. Adler

Hothouse Stomp, the Ghost Train Orchestra's debut, was a memorable portrait of forgotten pre-Swing bands from '20s Harlem and Chicago: Charlie Johnson's Paradise Orchestra; Tiny Parham and His Musicians; Fess Williams and His Royal Flush Orchestra; McKinney's Cotton Pickers. *Book of Rhapsodies* detoured into fascinating late '30s chamber jazz, but with *Hot Town*, Boston-based trumpeter Brian Carpenter explores the late '20s world of Parham, Johnson and Williams once again, adding Harlem clarinetist/saxophonist Cecil Scott and his Bright Boys, represented by "Bright Boy Blues" and "Springfield Stomp".

Drummer Rob Garcia animates *Hot Town* with a wide-ranging percussive vocabulary, always in the pocket, driving the beat alongside Ron Caswell on tuba and Cynthia Sayer on plectrum banjo. Sayer's tight accompaniment, fills and solo breaks end up doing a lot to define the band's sound. She's quite unlike the wilder Brandon Seabrook of *Hothouse Stomp*, though she's equipped with trad-jazz chops that give the music just as much feel and spark.

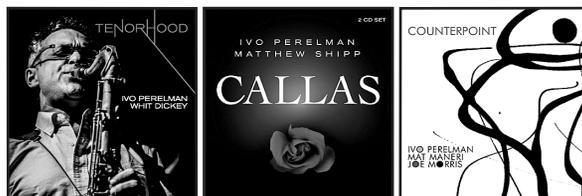
Most of this obscure '20s jazz is on Spotify (one clear benefit of the controversial service, it seems to

me). Hearing the original versions against these is a big plus—Carpenter nails the spirit and ingenuity of the songs but lets the reeds, brass and string possibilities of his band dictate the path of the arrangements. It's not a pure repertory approach, in other words; liberties are taken and the gifts of trombonist Curtis Hasselbring, clarinetist Dennis Lichtman, alto saxophonist Andy Laster, violinist Mazz Swift and the rest come through in unexpected ways, from bright tempos to slow drags.

Swift sings the busy Monette Moore vocal part on Charlie Johnson's "You Ain't the One" fairly straight and transforms Fess Williams' astonishingly hammy vocal on "You Can't Go Wrong" into something more melodic and direct. Guest Colin Stetson plays mesmerizing bass saxophone on "Hot Town" and Fats Waller's "Alligator Crawl" (both Fess Williams vehicles), highlighting the legacy of Gene "Otto" Mikell, one of the first bass saxophonists ever to record (as Carpenter mentions in his absorbing liner essay).

There is one outright historical breakthrough. "Mo'Lasses", written by Luckey Roberts and arranged by Benny Waters, is previously unheard: the original 1929 Charlie Johnson master was held back, marked "destroy" in fact. Collector Mitchell Kaba found the discarded pressing by accident in a Manhattan thrift store in 2011. Carpenter's treatment of this involved, quick-strutting piece epitomizes how the Ghost Train Orchestra crafts a unified, even original sound from disparate and long-forgotten materials.

For more information, visit accuraterecords.com. This group is at Prospect Park Bandshell Jul. 17th. See Calendar.



Tenorhood
Ivo Perelman/Whit Dickey (Leo)
Callas
Ivo Perelman/Matthew Shipp (Leo)
Counterpoint
Ivo Perelman/Joe Morris/Mat Maneri (Leo)
by Stuart Broomer

Tenor saxophonist Ivo Perelman has been releasing CDs at a remarkable clip, 18 on Leo Records alone since 2012. Despite that volume, Perelman has managed to maintain remarkable levels of freshness and creativity in these wholly improvised sessions, varying instrumentation, picking his partners carefully (principally from a small coterie of longstanding associates) and often programming his work around unusual sources, like the novels of the brilliant Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector. That pattern holds true for his latest releases, one recorded in March 2014 and two from March 2015.

Tenorhood, the earlier of the three, features that almost elemental instrumentation of tenor saxophone and drums, the latter played by Whit Dickey. There's a fundamental expressiveness here, a rhythmic power and linear invention conveying much of the spirit of the tenor's history in jazz and Perelman's interest in it, stretching back to his roots in the instrument's mainstream voices. Perelman has named the pieces after the fact for saxophonists that he catches echoes of within the pieces, but the style speaks to Perelman's identity. If certain timbral resemblances come through strongest in tributes to John Coltrane and Albert Ayler, it may just be that they're the building blocks of free jazz saxophone. Perelman's range of reference, however, is broader, as he hears certain phrases to suggest the melodic curve of Hank Mobley, grain of Ben Webster or rhythmic shapes of Sonny Rollins.

In his notes to *Callas*, Neil Tesser discusses the problems that Perelman faced in mid-2014 when he

was diagnosed with a damaged larynx caused by his embouchure. Perelman became interested in singers who faced the same problem and a burgeoning interest in opera led to his immersion in the recordings of Maria Callas. Perelman's invocation of the great opera singer is a rare transmutation of one kind of work into another: Perelman and pianist Matthew Shipp improvise 16 duets over two CDs, each bearing the name of one of Callas' roles. Pressing regularly into the tenor's higher register with a rare, full sound, Perelman brings a singular passion, improvising where before there was formality, while Shipp frames Perelman's instrumental songs with looming drama, a subtly harmonic mind and near-orchestral breadth of sound. It's a significant moment in the art of the improvised duo, achieving a rare song-like quality that suffuses the rhythmic dialogue of "Violetta", heartfelt tension of "Leonora" and clarion emotion of "Norma".

The achievement of *Counterpoint* is less dramatic but just as real, Perelman in an unusual trio of tenor, guitar and viola with Joe Morris and Mat Maneri: the precedent is the trio the late saxophonist Joe Maneri had with Morris and son Mat some 20 years ago. It's clear that the combination of voices, creative equals all in roughly the same register, is an inspiration for all three, resulting in continuous improvised counterpoint in which individual voices might sometimes assume a lead, but never at the expense of a rare collective creation that has initiating and reflecting voices merging. While the microtonal work of Joe Maneri underlies some of this music, there's an overall fluency with tonality: various approaches arise and blend, creating a constant sense of movement at the music's core.

For more information, visit leorecords.com. Perelman and Shipp are at Michiko Rehearsal Studios Jul. 17th. See Calendar.

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