

and not try to call attention to himself.”

Faulkner bowed his head, embarrassed, when recalling that experience, part of a student chamber-music program in the summer of 2007. “Everybody in my band forgot the music and couldn’t remember the arrangements, so we winged it. I was just trying to keep the band together so Branford wouldn’t stop us. Afterwards, he went down the line and told everyone what they did wrong, and I was sitting there shaking and sweating. And he gets to me and says, ‘Good job, kid.’ I think my chest was probably about 12 feet out.”

A few weeks later, Faulkner received his first call to sit in with the band, and earlier this year the spot became his on a permanent basis. His first show was on his 18th birth-

day, and the tour wrapped up just in time for him to make it to prom and graduation.

Flexing his chops onstage every night but still getting back to the hotel in time to finish his homework was a difficult balance to maintain, but his experiences have matured him, Faulkner said.

“People always paid attention because of my age, but I always had to think of myself not just as the 13-year-old kid who everybody’s going to treat nicely. Being in this business, I’ve been around adults for the majority of my life. That totally changed my thinking about my playing and the way that I handle myself in the company of others.”

Marsalis shrugged off any doubts about Faulkner’s age. “I have no qualms with age,”

he said. “Just maturity. I’ve played with musicians who are much older yet behave much younger on an emotional level. Mature young players have a desire to learn, and they bring instant energy to a bunch of old fogies like us.”

Looking ahead, Faulkner hopes to expand his horizons, regardless of genre. “The drums are an extension of me,” he said. “I’ll play anything that has a beat. Music is music to me—classical, Indian ragas, R&B, neo-soul, whatever. I try to incorporate it all into my playing in some way while still being true to the tradition. If it’s God’s will, I just want to be a part of music until I leave this Earth. As long as that happens, I’m pretty sure I’ll be OK.” **SHAUN BRADY**

## Divine Simplicity

**Bassist-composer Linda Oh’s streamlined approach yields one of the year’s best debuts**

**B**assist Linda Oh has a gift for cutting away extraneous matter and getting to the point. The title of her self-released debut album, *Entry*, couldn’t be simpler. The idea was to choose one band lineup, one aesthetic, and stick to it, generating organic surprise with a trio sonority not heard every day: trumpet, bass and drums. Flanked by trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and drummer Obed Calvaire, Oh dreamed up a music of marked rhythmic finesse, sparsely orchestrated lines and admirable concision—*Entry* clocks in at a punchy 46 minutes. It’s easily a debut of the year, perhaps an album of the year.

“I didn’t want an album that was lots of little pieces,” Oh says. “I wanted an intent, you know? And I wanted people to be able to listen to the whole album in one go, which very few people do nowadays.” When she speaks of *Entry* as a “concept album,” it’s not in the rock-epic sense, but rather in the sense of steady development, interconnected ideas and logical flow. “Two of the songs, ‘Gunners’ and ‘A Year From Now,’ are very different, but they use the same motifs,” she remarks, singing an ascending four-note line to demonstrate. “So I wanted those two to follow after each other. I thought a lot about pacing.”

The contrasts are rich from the start. On the opening “Morning Sunset,” Akinmusire plays crisp legato over Oh’s steady double-stop riffs and Calvaire’s funky broken-beat patterns. “Numero Uno” begins with multitracked trumpet evoking a kind of smeared polyphony, leading into a brisk, tightly constructed theme and burning solos. The seesawing groove of “Fourth Limb” and the strongly boppish contour of “201” also highlight the trio’s fine chemistry and interdependence.

“A lot of times when people play odd meters, the harmony kind of goes away,” says Akinmusire. “With Linda, the harmony is just as important. We’re both single-line instruments but there’s so much harmony being implied.” Moreover, the trumpet’s bright timbre offsets



and accentuates the darker bass. Oh observes: “It’s difficult to blend brass with strings in the first place, without a middleman like a piano or guitar. And trumpet is such a physically demanding instrument, so I have to share responsibilities a lot.”

Oh is of Chinese descent, born in Malaysia and raised in Perth, Australia. A New Yorker as of three years ago, she is living proof not only of jazz’s global reach, but also of the city’s need for continual new blood from abroad. “I played bassoon throughout high school,” she recalls, “and was planning to go to college as a classical bassoonist. When I was 15, an uncle

of mine gave me a bass guitar, and I was playing a lot of rock—Red Hot Chili Peppers, Led Zeppelin, Rage Against the Machine. I was all about [Chili Peppers bassist] Flea; he was my guy.” Oh closes *Entry* with an homage to her early hero: a balladic treatment of “Soul to Squeeze,” a Chili Peppers single that fits the trio’s melodic personality like a glove.

While attending the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Oh listened hard to Jaco Pastorius and considered herself a fusion bassist in the making. “The college insisted I learn upright, and Ray Brown was the reason I thought I really should give it a shot. Ultimately I pretty much dropped the electric for a few years.” Now, having earned a master’s degree from the Manhattan School

of Music, Oh is weaving the electric back in. At a pre-release concert in late August at (Le) Poisson Rouge (with Tommy Crane subbing for Calvaire), she premiered two electric bass songs: the original “Insidious Lee” and a version of Djavan’s “Lambada de Serpente,” which she sang in serviceable Portuguese. “It’s good to take certain risks at gigs,” says Oh, who’s had no lack of them lately—touring with Remy and Pascal Le Boeuf, playing in Sarah Manning’s Shatter the Glass and fronting another chordless trio, with David Binney on alto and Henry Cole on drums.

Printed in spiraling text on Oh’s CD is a sort of mini-manifesto, in which she laments “our need to flex our 16th note muscles exchanging humility for acceptance

into the youtube hall of fame.” With *Entry*, Oh resists the temptations of ego even as she stakes a claim as a leader in one of the world’s toughest scenes. “Apart from having the rhythmic element that really gives the music a push, mainly I wanted the songs to be based around melody—very direct and memorable, and very honest,” she says. Simple and melodic, however, does not mean easy; much of Oh’s material is through-composed. “You really have to pay attention,” reports Akinmusire. “If you miss a couple of beats it’s over, because nothing’s going to come back repeated. What really impressed me was that Linda knew exactly how she wanted the compositions to go down.” **DAVID R. ADLER**

## Blurred Subdivision

**For percussionist-composer Dan Weiss, the rhythms of progressive jazz and Indian music are infinitely compatible**

**F**or several years, the New York-based drummer, percussionist and composer Dan Weiss has straddled two musical cultures, one foot planted firmly in the world of progressive jazz and the other in the complex rhythmic cycles of Indian music. Increasingly, the lines separating those two disciplines have become blurred. “I’m finding my midway point, a balance,” he says. “They’ve been blending together more and more.”

In the past couple of years, the prolific Weiss, 32, has contributed traps to new albums by guitarists Miles Okazaki (*Generations*, Sunnyside) and Rez Abbasi (*Things to Come*, Sunnyside), and tabla to alto saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa’s Indo-Pak Coalition (*Apti*, Innova). Weiss has also completed his next two albums as a leader, both due out next year: *Timshel*, the Dan Weiss Trio’s followup to 2006’s *Now Yes When* (Toneofapitch), and *Jhaptal Drumset Solo*, a duo piece with Okazaki that expands on the concepts the pair realized on 2005’s *Tintal Drumset Solo* (Chhandayan). A gander at Weiss’ résumé over the past few years also reveals contributions to recordings by alto saxophonist David Binney, trombonist Jacob Garchik, guitarists Joel Harrison and Gary Lucas, and others. Weiss’ itinerary has been so full that he decided to abandon yet another passion, metal, in order to concentrate on his other pursuits—but not until leaving his mark on Bloody Panda’s 2007 *Pheromone* (Level Plane) album.

With his trio, Weiss—who writes all of the group’s music—proves a strong director but is also particularly attuned to subtle changes in the textures and dynamics put forward by bandmates Jacob Sacks (piano) and Thomas Morgan (bass). A listener comes to expect the unexpected as moods shift and morph, subtly and often without warning. Melodies blossom and recede, rhythmic patterns build and retract, both dramatically and slyly. Minimalism and

grandeur toy with one another. In his liner notes for *Now Yes When*, Weiss describes the intent behind one track, “The Day After Tomorrow,” as such: “I have always liked the idea of writing with additive forms as a basis, and here there are two different sections that grow little by little each time they are played. Every section of the composition is through-composed, including the drum part.”

Weiss’ most noteworthy achievements to date, however—not to take away from his more expansive and improvisational jazz-centric ensemble work—are surely the two guitar-drumset recordings he’s made



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