

## JAZZ


**KARRIN ALLYSON**  
*Many a New Day*

Karrin Allyson, vocals; Kenny Barron, piano; John Patitucci, bass  
 Motema MTA-CD-183 (CD). 2015. Karrin Allyson, Michael Leonhart, prods.; Katherine Miller, eng.  
 DDD. TT: 54:36

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★

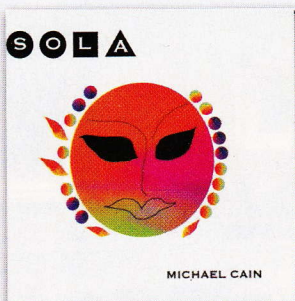
**SONICS** ★★★★★

There is no shortage of jazz singers, but only a few make the A-list. Karrin Allyson does not have Cassandra Wilson's soul or Dianne Reeves's chops, but she has impeccable control over her come-hither voice. She can be waiflike, sly, sexy, or worldly wise, often in the same song.

Her new album is all musical-theater pieces by Rodgers and Hammerstein. The sources are *Oklahoma*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, and *The Sound of Music*. No such project has ever been undertaken by a jazz singer. Allyson's interpretations are individual rather than definitive. Songs associated with particular characters and movies, such as "Bali Ha'i" and "I Have Dreamed," become current, personal, standalone creative statements. "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" and "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top" lose any vestiges of Pollyanna sentiment. Allyson makes them cool, crisp vehicles for blowing.

She made a brilliant decision by choosing only two world-class collaborators, pianist Kenny Barron and bassist John Patitucci. Barron's exquisite details and fills always arrive exactly on time. "Something Good" is perhaps the most indispensable of the 14 tracks. Patitucci makes it balance on a tipping point of conjectural emotion, which he then releases and fulfills in a rapt, heartfelt solo. The spare ensemble format creates open space for each musician to develop intimate relationships with songs embedded in the American psyche.

The engineering by Katherine Miller is an object lesson in how to record a voice and two instruments with clarity and presence. —Thomas Conrad


**MICHAEL CAIN**  
*Sola*

Michael Cain, piano, keyboards, programming; Julian Tanaka, clarinet; Eddie Rich, saxophone; Mike Gonzales, trumpet; James Genus, Abo Gumroyan, bass; Renaldo Elliot, Billy Hart, drums  
 Native Drum 003 (CD). 2015. Michael Cain, prod.; Michael Brorby, Vincent Castaldo, engs. DDD. TT: 41:28

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★

**SONICS** ★★★★★

Following up *Solo* (2011), a reverie for solo piano and electronics, the underrated Michael Cain returns with an ensemble date, *Sola*. His glitchy, beat-oriented side—the brilliant synthesizer hues, complex and haunting chords, arcing electric-piano lines, and fat bass tones—comes across on six tracks with his "Vegas Band," which includes three horns and rhythm section. The remaining two tracks, with his "New York Band"—James Genus and Billy Hart—highlight Cain's jazz-trio side, though only the closing ballad, "My Moyo," is acoustic.

An intriguing, somewhat elusive sideman for the likes of Jack DeJohnette and Meshell Ndegeocello, Cain has developed a sound that's conversant with jazz, electronic music, Eastern musics, and other influences. That seamlessness is all over *Sola*, from the rubato blend of clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, and multiple keyboards in "Orun" to the limping meter and descending melodic hook of "Esu Dance," and in the techno pulse and inspired three-horn passages of "Wogg."

Produced and mixed by Cain, *Sola* is at its most ambitious with "In the Front Door," a reference to battling racial segregation. Cain weaves in the speaking voice of his mentor, the late bandleader Gerald Wilson, to relate the early-1960s success of the NAACP in integrating the music venues of Las Vegas, where Cain was raised. It's a beautiful gesture, set to a spacey, in-the-pocket groove.

—David R. Adler

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