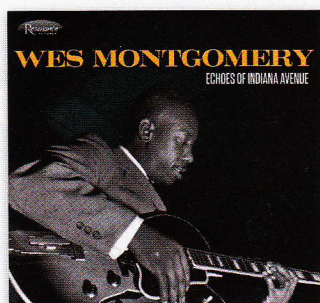


JAZZ



WES MONTGOMERY
Echoes of Indiana Avenue

Wes Montgomery, guitar; Buddy Montgomery, Earl Van Riper, piano; Melvin Rhyne, piano, organ; Monk Montgomery, Mingo Jones, bass; Sonny Johnson, Paul Parker, drums
Resonance HCD-2011 (CD). 2012. Zev Feldman, prod.; unknown engs. ADD? TT: 52:50

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

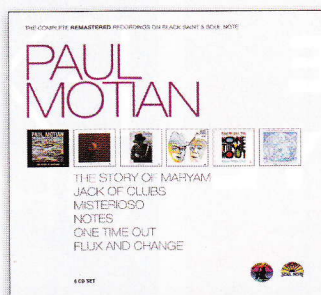
SONICS ★★★★★

Jazz fans know the legend. Cannonball Adderley encountered Wes Montgomery playing monumental guitar in an after-hours Indianapolis joint in 1959, and called producer Orrin Keepnews at 4am. Keepnews signed Montgomery to his Riverside label, and the rest is history. But almost no pre-Riverside Montgomery has ever been heard, except by those who, back in the day, hung out at the Turf Bar or the Missile Room on Indiana Avenue.

This music was professionally recorded in unknown Indianapolis studios and clubs in 1957 or 1958. The tapes apparently passed through several private hands before surfacing in 2008. The reasons Cannonball woke up Keepnews are all here: Montgomery's technique, sound, drive, swing, and soul.

Much of it burns. "Take the 'A' Train" is wildly fast and flawless in single notes, octaves, and chords. "Straight, No Chaser" rockets through musical space like a bullet train. "Nica's Dream" has a gut-level natural swing no longer found in our world.

Much of it is also surprisingly gentle. Montgomery and organist Melvin Rhyne are deeply bonded on ballads. There is a "Round Midnight" for the ages, and a "Darn That Dream" in which Montgomery sounds precisely poised on the brink of consuming emotion. The production is exemplary: optimized sound; remembrances by people who were there, like Monk and Buddy Montgomery and Pat Martino; family photos; street scenes from Indianapolis in the 1950s, so far away and long ago. —Thomas Conrad



PAUL MOTIAN

The Complete Remastered Recordings on Black Saint & Soul Note

Paul Motian, drums; Jim Pepper, Joe Lovano, saxophones; Bill Frisell, guitar; Paul Bley, Enrico Pieranunzi, piano; Ed Schuller, bass
Black Saint/Soul Note BXS 1008 (6 CDs). 2010. Giovanni Bonandirini, prod.; Genarro Carone, eng. DDD? TT: 4:54:25

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

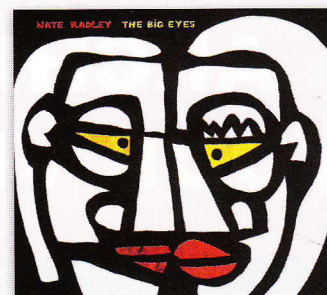
SONICS ★★★★★

In this box are six CDs spanning 1983–1992—just one interval in the career of the recently departed Paul Motian (1931–2011). But the '80s music is significant: this was when the legendary drummer began to bond with Joe Lovano and Bill Frisell, who appear on four discs.

Motian's Soul Note recordings also shore up his stature as a top-level composer, a central part of his legacy. Every piece on *The Story of Maryam* and *Jack of Clubs* is a Motian original. The same goes for all but two tracks of *Misterioso*, and seven of the nine tracks on *One Time Out*. "Morpion," "Trieste," "Johnny Broken Wing," "Drum Music"—these and others stayed in Motian's repertoire to the end.

The 1987 duo date with Paul Bley, *Notes*, mainly features Bley's compositions, while the 1992 duo *Flux and Change*, recorded live with pianist Enrico Pieranunzi, comprises standards and originals in a free-flowing suite format. (In a regrettable lapse, Bley is credited as the *Flux and Change* pianist on the box's back cover.)

The attractive original record jackets include liner notes by Ira Gitler, Nat Hentoff, Howard Mandel, and others, albeit in very tiny print, and there's no new essay or booklet to add perspective. The remastered sound is excellent, however. Lovano and Jim Pepper are an explosive two-tenor team on three discs. Frisell's guitar ranges from ghostly and coloristic to screaming with fuzz tone and effects. Motian holds it all together at the drum kit, and his loose, choppy, discursive approach remains entirely his own. —David Adler



NATE RADLEY

The Big Eyes

Nate Radley, guitar; Loren Stillman, alto saxophone; Pete Rende, Fender Rhodes; Matt Pavolka, bass; Ted Poor, drums
Fresh Sound New Talent FSNT 395 (CD). 2011. Nate Radley, prod.; Matt Marinelli, eng. DDD. TT: 62:02

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

SONICS ★★★★★

Nate Radley's name began popping up around 2010, as a sideman on the projects of respected New Yorkers like Mark Mommaas, Andrew Rathbun, and Alan Ferber. Radley's edgy lines and cryptic guitar atmospheres left you wanting more.

More has arrived. *The Big Eyes*, Radley's recording debut as a leader, is the first full look at an exciting new talent. He writes mysterious tunes in which simple contrasting rhythmic and melodic motifs are juxtaposed to create complex, unresolved enigmas. For several pieces he uses, strategically, the alto saxophone of Loren Stillman and the Fender Rhodes of Pete Rende. These instrumental voices, in a tonal range overlapping the guitar, add depth and detail to the ensemble sound.

But the format on most tunes is guitar-bass-drums, and Radley dominates the solo space. His guitar narratives are unlike any you have heard before. They proceed with teasing patience, in clear notes that softly sting. They come upon, and obsessively examine, small, fresh ideas that aggregate into large designs. His favorite colors are dark and his favorite groove is slow, snaky 4/4 (in which drummer Ted Poor is an expert). Pieces like "Archipelago" and "Wise River" and "Blue Square" sound like the work of a rock power trio filtered through the erudite sensibility of the New England Conservatory (which Radley attended). Radley's chords slash and threaten but never break out, and Poor's backbeats are tense with potential force, never unleashed. Yet "Ascent" builds so subtly that you don't notice the intensity until it is upon you, in waves. Nate Radley: You heard it here first. —Thomas Conrad