

DAVID R. ADLER

BRIAN CARPENTER'S
GHOST TRAIN ORCHESTRA*Hothouse Stomp: The Music of 1920s
Chicago and Harlem*

Brian Carpenter, trumpet, harmonica, voice; Dennis Lichtman, clarinet; Andy Laster, alto saxophone; Matt Bauder, alto & tenor saxophone, clarinet; Curtis Hasselbring, trombone; Ron Caswell, tuba; Brandon Seabrook, banjo; Mazz Swift, violin, vocals; Jordan Voelker, viola; Rob Garcia, drums
Accurate 5062 (CD). 2011. Danny Blume, eng., mix. DDD? TT: 38:46

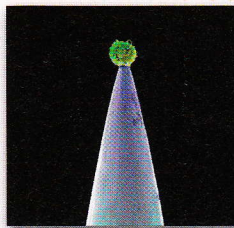
It's great to hear pre-swing big-band charts done up in high fidelity. But Boston-based trumpeter Brian Carpenter takes liberties with music by Charlie Johnson, Fess Williams, Tiny Parham, and McKinney's Cotton Pickers, setting his Ghost Train Orchestra apart from your typical trad-jazz repertory group. Several GTO members have avant-garde pedigrees, which accounts for the free-wheeling spirit (and occasional modern improv) on these tracks. Carpenter's erudite liner notes bring to life the history of the period. And his song choices—dig “Stop Kidding,” by the startlingly innovative John Nesbitt—shed light on long-forgotten areas of jazz's past.

RALPH PETERSON'S UNITY PROJECT
Outer Reaches

Ralph Peterson, drums; Jovan Alexandre, tenor saxophone; Josh Evans, trumpet; Pat Bianchi, organ; David Fiuczynski, guitar (tracks 10, 12)
Onyx Music (CD). 2011. Ralph Peterson, Pat Bianchi, engs., mix. DDD? TT: 78:47

Drummer Ralph Peterson, thunderous yet supple, is just the guy to tackle Woody Shaw classics “The Moontrane,” “Beyond All Limits,” and “Katrina Ballerina.” The former 1980s “young lion” is now mentoring serious new talent, represented here by Josh Evans and Jovan Alexandre in the front line. Their soloing is ferocious, their horn personalities uncommonly rich and warm (and beautifully captured). Pat Bianchi brings a Larry Young vibe, and “Fuze” adds McLaughlin-esque shredding on two cuts, but Peterson isn't after replication: his originals, dedicated to mom, dad, and wife, give a personal dimension to what is surely a highlight of 2011.

JOHN ATKINSON



PETER GABRIEL

New Blood (Special Edition)

with Ane Brun, Melanie Gabriel, Thomas Cawley, vocals; New Blood Orchestra, Louisa Fuller (leader), Ben Foster (conductor)
Real World 00038 (2 CDs). 2011. Peter Gabriel, prod., arr.; John Metcalfe, prod., arr., orchestrations, mix; Dickie Chappell, mix, eng.; Scott Barnett, Tobias Froberg, engs. DDD. TT: 2:32:06

I finished reading Walter Isaacson's biography of Steve Jobs as I prepared to write these brief reviews, and was struck by how adeptly Jobs re-created himself. He was not an artist as such, but Jobs's life illustrates how the artist who doesn't keep evolving ultimately fails. By that measure, Peter Gabriel's career is a continuing success, even if this 2011 album comprises second examinations of his earlier songs. Gabriel's *Scratch My Back*, which featured empathetic arrangements by John Metcalfe of other people's songs, was one of my 2011 “R2D4” picks; in *New Blood*, Metcalfe applies his orchestral imagination to a selection of Gabriel's own material. And again, there is no drum kit, no rhythm section. The sound of the orchestra, recorded at Air Lyndhurst in London, is rich and large, reminiscent of that on Joni Mitchell's *Both Sides Now*, from 2000, which was also recorded there. Occasionally the space on the accompaniment stands too much in contrast to the closeness of Gabriel's voice, particularly in the final track, “Solsbury Hill,” which, for reasons explained in the booklet, is separated from the rest of the album by almost five minutes of ambient sound. Two favorites of mine from *Security*, “Wallflower” and “San Jacinto,” are here, along with two favorites from *So*, “In Your Eyes” and “Don't Give Up,” though Norwegian singer Ane Brun's excessive vibrato in the latter takes some getting used to after the glory of Kate Bush in the original, and the purity of Paula Cole in 1994's *Secret World Live* version. The second CD mainly comprises the orchestral backing tracks, which, if musically incomplete, bear witness both to the inventiveness of Metcalfe's arrangements and the completeness of Gabriel's musical imagination.

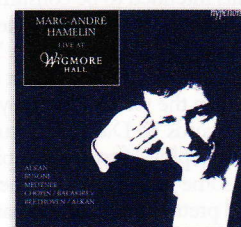
STEVE WINWOOD

Steve Winwood

Island 842 774-2 (CD). 1977. Steve Winwood, Chris Blackwell, Mark Miller Mundy, prods.; Phill Brown, eng.; Robert Ash, Ray Doyle, asst. engs.; Lee Hulko (Sterling Sound), CD mastering. AAD. TT: 37:25

At the fall 2011 AES Convention in New York, I was invited to take part in a workshop on “The Loudness Wars,” chaired by Thomas Lund of TC Electronic. As part of the preparation of my segment, I went hunting for rock albums with respectable dynamic range. Not surprisingly, I couldn't find any from this century that weren't dynamically compromised. But among the jewels I did discover was Steve Winwood's first solo record. Overshadowed in sales by the subsequent *Arc of a Diver*, the LP release of *Steve Winwood* was in constant rotation on my Linn at the end of the 1970s, and when I ripped the CD into my iTunes library, Pure Music's meters informed me that this album had as much dynamic range as a good classical recording, its crest factor exceeding 20dB much of the time. Musically, the album wears its 35 years well. From the loping rhythm of the opener, “Hold On,” to the anthemic closer, “Let Me Make Something in Your Life,” both written with the late Jim Capaldi and featuring the dream team of Willie Weeks on bass and Andy Newmark on drums, you're struck by the sparseness of the soundstage created by engineer Phill Brown, despite the many instrumental flavors created by Winwood. (“Now this is an audiophile recording!” I commented in my AES presentation.) But the track that sticks in your memory is the only survivor from the original sessions, “Vacant Chair,” cowritten with the late Vivian Stanshall in memory of Graham Bond. Alan Spenner's bass and John Susswell's drums underpin a hypnotic guitar riff from Julian Marvin as a multitracked Winwood chants “o-ku nsu-kun no-ko”: in Yoruba dialect, “the dead are weeping for the dead.”

JIM AUSTIN

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN
Live at Wigmore Hall