

# Record Reviews

## PAUL BLEY TRIO

### MODERN CHANT: INSPIRATION FROM GREGORIAN CHANT

*The New You; Sweet Talk; Funhouse; Please Don't; Wisecracks; Spot; Russell; Digitant; Decompose; Loose Change* (52.12)

Bley (p); David Eyges (e-clo); Bruce Ditmas (d). New York, 17 September 1994.

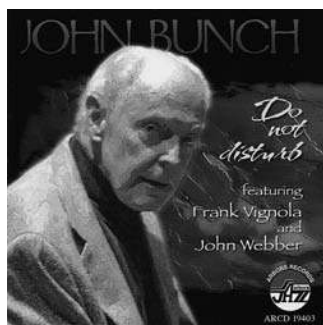
### Venus Records VHCD-2115

I admit to being less the wiser about this set, as the sleeve notes are in Japanese and it appears not to have been reviewed in *Jazz Journal* when it was first issued in the mid-1990s. And try as I might, I can hear nothing that sounds like Gregorian chant in any of the 10 pieces. What does jump out immediately is the occasionally tremulous, nervy sound of the electric cello that stands in poor comparison to the well-modulated tones of Bley's piano and Bruce Ditmas's subtle but ever-insistent drumming. It's an odd choice of instrument, particularly when, as on *Sweet Talk*, Eyges plays it as if acoustic, its warm, woody tone well to the fore.

But hey ho, its Bley we've come to listen to, and he doesn't disappoint. He's hard man to pin down stylistically, ranging on this set

from the higher register ruminative explorations of *Please Don't* to the funk of *Funhouse*, a gorgeous slab of soulful boogaloo that wouldn't disgrace a 1960s Blue Note session. Throughout he sounds committed to each note and phrase, achieving definition and direction at every point. His unravelling lines on *Spot* are a delight, as is his hustle and bustle through *Russell*. A welcome reissue, whatever its provenance and instrumentation.

Simon Adams



## JOHN BUNCH DO NOT DISTURB

*John's Bunch; Doxy; Bill; Do Not Disturb; My Ideal; Anthropology; I've Just Seen Her; Four; My Man's Gone Now; In Your Own Sweet Way; Come Sunday; You're My Everything; Get Out Of Town* (72.07)

John Bunch (p); Frank Vignola (g); John Webber (b). NYC, 13 October & 22 December 2009.

### Arbors ARCD 19403

This is a freewheeling, swinging delight of a set by the late John Bunch's trio. John's death earlier this year robbed jazz of a first-class soloist who was versatile enough to play in a variety of styles with equal facility. Although the piano trio with bass and drums is the more common and usual the sleeve notes here point out that important groups such as those led by Art Tatum and Nat Cole both

used guitar and bass. They set a style and standard for such a line up which was later picked up and adopted by groups such as Oscar Peterson's guitar trio.

Bunch was a sensitive, original and inventive soloist and this is one of his best sessions although sadly almost certainly his last. His light, expressive touch at the keyboard was adjusted to fit the requirements of each selection and with the aid of Vignola and Webber this set is enjoyable from start to finish. Mixing together compositions like Rollins's *Doxy*, Ellington's *Do Not Disturb* and Brubeck's *In Your Own Sweet Way* makes for a fascinating and enjoyable programme.

John loved good standards and always came up with fresh improvisations on his choices, as he does here so effectively on *You're My Everything* and Porter's *Get Out Of Town*. On *Do Not Disturb* John fashions a fresh improvisation on his solo and seems to be offering a parody of George Shearing's style for a minute or two. Vignola's solos are carefully constructed and Webber is a tower of strength on bass. The entire CD, very well recorded, is a fitting epitaph to a great jazz pianist.

Derek Ansell

## VERONA CHARD

### FEVER

*Fever; Willow Weep For Me; Why Can't You Behave; Fear No More (The Heat Of The Sun); The King Must Die; Cool; This Can't Be Love; Dunsinane Blues; My Funny Valentine; Romeo & Juliet; I Am Not Interested In Love; Jail Break; Ode To Bottom* (55.00)

Verona Chard (v, arr); Kevin Robinson (t); Ray Wordsworth (tb); Alan Barnes (s, cl); Charlotte Glasson (s); Alex Stanford (p, org, arr); Fiona Clifton-Welker (hp); Dave Green (b); Andy Hamill (b, elb); Mark Fletcher (d). 2010.

### Vamp Jazz RBCD006



Verona Chard, trained at the Royal Academy and Trinity, came to jazz largely through singing *Jail Break* on Humphrey Lyttelton's 'Sad, Sweet Songs and Crazy Rhythms' (2004, Calligraph CLG CD 042), an experience she describes as 'life-changing'. In 'Fever', an imaginative enterprise well realised, we can see how far she has come in six years.

It's not surprising, given Verona's theatrical experience, to find that 'Fever' was inspired by John Dankworth's 1964 'Shakespeare and All That Jazz'. Indeed, her thespianism surely informs the most striking moments here, such as the occasion, 3:35 into *Cool*, where 'coolly cool boy' erupts in a melismatic tornado that sounds unlike anything in the standard jazz vocal lexicon.

Ms Chard is developing a strong sense of jazz phrasing at all tempos, but she is at her most compelling on ballads. Her light, fluid voice sounds particularly at home on the Sondheim/Shakespeare *Fear No More*, aided by a beautiful arrangement that makes telling use of the harp. The harp crops up again on *Romeo & Juliet*, where Tchaikovsky's chord sequence scans quite happily over a bossa nova beat.

Pianist Stanford had a major role in arrangements that mix funk, reggae and swing, and Glasson and Robinson weave convincing bebop lines throughout. Alan Barnes and Dave Green appear on a number of tracks, lending top-flight distinction to an ambitious debut.

Clive Cooper

### JJ CONTENT

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## RAY CHARLES

### THE GREAT RAY CHARLES

(1) *The Ray; My Melancholy Baby; (2) Black Coffee; (1) There's No You; Doodlin' (3) Sweet Sixteen Bars (1) I Surrender Dear; Undecided (42.04)*

(1) Joseph Bridgewater, John Hunt (t); David Newman (as, ts); Emmett Davis (bar); Ray Charles (p); Roosevelt Sheffield (b); William Peoples (d).

(2) Ray Charles (p); Oscar Pettiford (b); Joe Hunt (d).

(3) Ray Charles (p); Roosevelt Sheffield (b); William Peoples (d).

All 1957, no dates listed.

### Rhino Atlantic 1259 (vinyl)

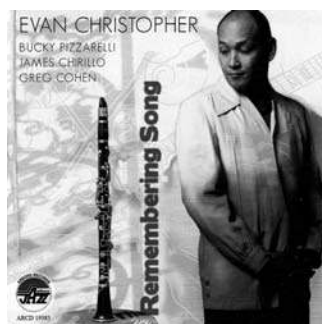
Following some highly successful R&B records, Charles went in a new direction with this 1957 straightahead jazz LP. He recruited Quincy Jones to provide some highly serviceable arrangements, did three himself and took his current band into the studio to put down the tracks. The results are more than worthy of attention by straightahead jazz enthusiasts and if Charles did not repeat this experiment it was probably purely down to financial considerations; taking a seven-piece R&B band out on the road produces big, big bucks where jazz mostly provides the satisfaction of laying down really good music.

Charles plays some really earthy lines on the blues *Black Coffee*, supported only on this one track by master bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Joe Harris. Equally effective and moving is his down-home blues playing on *Sweet Sixteen Bars* with his then current bass and drum team. Jones gives him a fine framework on *The Ray* and Horace Silver's *Doodlin'* and there is crisp ensemble work and a tasty piano solo on *There's No You*. David Newman's alto and tenor solos on most of these selections are little gems of inventive economy, strong enough to make an impression, short enough not to get in the main soloist's way.

Full marks to Atlantic Rhino for the high quality sound from 180

gram audiophile vinyl; all of the instruments have that fine, natural, musical sound and Charles's piano is clear and bright in the foreground. Rhino have also taken some trouble to reproduce these LPs almost exactly as they appeared on first release and the lacquers were cut by Doug Sax at their mastering lab. You can buy a five-CD set of Charles's Atlantic albums as reviewed in the May edition of JJ or you may like to pass on the R&B material and buy this jazz LP in its original format.

Derek Ansell



## EVAN CHRISTOPHER

### REMEMBERING SONG

*The Remembering Song – Prelude; The Wrath Of Grapes; Way Down Yonder In New Orleans; The River By The Road; The Remembering Song – Interlude; Mojo Blues; You Gotta Treat It Gentle; My Home Is In A Southern Town; Serenade; The Remembering Song; Waltz For Old Souls; Dear Old Southland (60.20)*

Christopher (cl); Bucky Pizzarelli, James Chirillo (g); Greg Cohen (b). NYC, 19 & 20 May, 2009.

### Arbors ARCD 19383

### DJANGO A LA CREOLE

*Tropical Moon; Finesse; Riverboat Shuffle; Django à La Créole; Solid Old Man; Songe d'Automne; Jubilee; Creole Eyes; Féerie; Mood Indigo; Passaporte Ao Paraíso (63.19)*

Christopher (cl); David Blenkhorn (solo g); Dave Kelbie (rhythm g); Sébastien Girardot (b). UK, March, 2010.

### Fremaux FA 527

Evan Christopher supported Jon-Erik Kellso with distinction on the celebrated 'Blue Roof Blues', a JJ critics' choice for 2007. But support is the operative word: he got some good blows on that CD, but Kellso's was quite properly the dominant voice. On 'Remembering Song' Christopher has what is essentially his own showcase, and

he proves to be an outstanding exponent of his chosen style.

It is a themed CD, loosely centred on Sidney Bechet, who was an avowed formative influence. Not that his style is close to Bechet's; Christopher, albeit Californian in origin, has thoroughly absorbed and adopted the Creole manner of early New Orleans clarinet playing, typified by such musicians as Jimmy Noone or Albert Nicholas. Paradoxically, Bechet, though actually a Creole, played in a style closer to the less schooled, vocalised negroid manner of such as Johnny Dodds. But Christopher certainly shares with Bechet a fondness for themes with minor-major transitions, and sometimes with Latin rhythms, which allow those soaring, exultant clarinet phrases.

The CD also celebrates New Orleans itself and its survival of Katrina, hence the appearance of *Way Down Yonder* in the programme; it is taken slowly, with a prelude and tango intermission which I did not know existed. *Remembering Song*, which punctuates the programme twice before appearing in full, also alludes to memories of the Crescent City. So the CD should be heard in sequence; a track-by-track review would be inappropriate. Christopher himself is quite brilliant, a great relief to us who regret the decline of the Creole clarinet into revivalist pastiche, and Chirillo, who swung so beautifully in Kenny Davern's final groups, is as marvellous as ever. With Bucky P and Greg Cohen, the rhythm is impeccable – and the absence of drums is a real advantage. Try to hear a bit and you'll want it all; it is a lovely issue both for mainstream lovers and broad-minded traddies.

My heart sank as another revisit to Django Reinhardt's jazz emerged from my review package in the form of 'Django A La Creole'. How wrong I was! It is a splendid and original album. Django, though often, and correctly, regarded as the father of gypsy jazz, was also deeply enmeshed in the popular French musical heritage. That influence provides a link to the Creole (and probably Cajun) input into early New Orleans jazz, a link which Christopher's obsession with the Creole clarinet style enables him, with his trio, to disclose beautifully.

Sometimes the link with Django is tenuous, notably with *Riverboat Shuffle*, but Blenkhorn's style and phrasing often echo Django's throughout this CD. *Jubilee* and

*Riverboat Shuffle* are lively 4/4s which swing along mightily – note especially the fluent interplay between solo guitar and clarinet towards the end of *Riverboat*. *Tropical Moon*, with what I understand to be a Haitian beat, and *Passaporte Ao Paraíso*, a Brazilian choro, are Bechet's recordings revisited in a Creole manner. *Solid Old Man* and *Finesse*, both famously recorded by Django with Rex Stewart and Barney Bigard, are presented lovingly but with originality, the latter opened by guitar and bass in 4/4 before sliding elegantly into a Latin rhythm as the clarinet enters. *Django À La Créole*, based on one of Django's untitled improvisations, has a Latin tinge. And so it goes. Every track is special in this warm, swinging and well-varied programme of jazz. Creole clarinet supported by rhythm with a Hot Club flavour is a delightful combination which I strongly recommend to all lovers of swinging jazz.

John Postgate

## ROSEMARY CLOONEY

### WITH THE JOHNNY GUARNIERI QUINTET

(1) *I Still Get A Thrill; Come Rain Or Come Shine; Grievin' For You; It's Only A Paper Moon; A Little Bit Independent; (2) I Didn't Slip, I Wasn't Pushed, I Fell; On An Ordinary Morning; I Didn't Know What Time It Was; Count Every Star; I'll Always Love You. (3) I've Got A Crush On You; It Had To Be You; Them There Eyes; I Never Had A Worry In The World; Nice Work If You Can Get It; Just You, Just Me; (4) Three Little Words; How Deep Is The Ocean; Our Very Own; It's Love; Crying Myself To Sleep; (5) Thou Swell; I Had A Talk With The Wind And Rain; Chicago; Can't Help Lovin' That Man; If I Were Your Girl; Bye, Bye Baby (62.30)*

(1) Rosemary Clooney (v); Johnny Guarnieri (p); Leo Guarnieri (b); George Walters (t); Charles Di Maggio (cl, ts); Frank Garisto (d). Voice Of America Recordings – PV2. (2) as (1) V.O.A.R. – PV6. (3) as (1) V.O.A.R. – PV11. (4) as (1) V.O.A.R. – PV19. (5) as (1) V.O.A.R. – PV22. All tracks ca. 1953. George Walters (t) not in all tracks – sometimes replaced by cello (unknown).

### Sounds Of Yester Year DSOY804

This disc has 27 'evergreen' popular numbers. Inevitably some are by famous songwriters (including the Gershwins, Jerome Kern and