



Different Directions

Bossa Brasil/Maurício de Souza Group (Pulsa Music)
by Marcia Hillman

Drummer Maurício de Souza dishes up a selection of familiar songs and original songs in this new CD, a mixture of Brazilian music and jazz. His bandmates include saxophonist Sharel Cassity, trumpeter Greg Gisbert, guitarist Mike Stern, vibraphonist Jerry Weir, pianists Marc Copland, Ben Winkelman or Miho Nobuzane, acoustic bassist Gary Mazzaroppi and electric bassist John Lee. de Souza provides the steady pulse throughout the album, punctuating the other musicians' statements, and is also responsible for all of the arrangements, except for the lovely Cassity ballad "The Acceptance of Resolve".

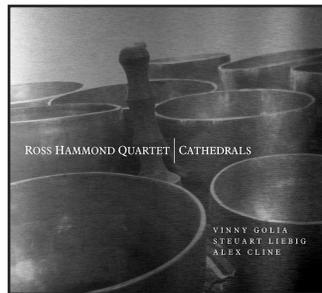
Brazilian favorites include Jobim's "Viva Sonhando" (featuring smooth and swinging performances by Stern and Winkelman), Edu Lobo's "Ponteio" (with Weir's striking solo and a stellar contribution by Mazzaroppi) and Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma" (which shows off Cassity's inspired saxophone work and some interesting tempo changes).

The Webster-Kaper standard "Invitation" gets an attention-demanding treatment with fine piano work from Winkelman and an engaging conversation between Stern and Mazzaroppi, de Souza offering up ever-

changing rhythmic figures. "Prelude" is a slow piece given a bluesy treatment by Cassity on soprano sax and counterpoint between the vibes and bass. The last track, Chick Corea's "Straight Up And Down", gets a straightahead, uptempo drum-driven treatment.

de Souza has put together a tasty CD, proving he and his band can swing as well as they can samba.

For more information, visit mauriciodesouzajazz.com. This project is at Blue Note Nov. 16th. See Calendar.



Cathedrals

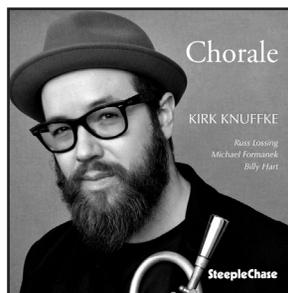
Ross Hammond Quartet (Prescott)
by Elliott Simon

Cathedrals is the second release from guitarist Ross Hammond's quartet and is a not-so-slow trip down '70s fusion memory lane. With a few gentle exceptions, Hammond has chosen to produce an incendiary in-your-face session highlighting relentless rhythms, searing solo work and precise in-tandem playing. Joining Hammond are saxophonist/flutist Vinny Golia, bassist Stuart Liebbig and drummer Alex Cline.

Golia has created a contemporary musical blend long on instrumental virtuosity, compositional excellence and improvisational inventiveness. Paired with the leader's aggressive guitar, the band has an incredible frontline defined by a combination of power, creativity, speed and accuracy. Cline and Liebbig work so well together in laying down heavy pulsating rhythms that they are a soloist's dream. The result is an intense and at times overpowering listening experience.

Session opener "A Song for Wizards" begins with a nod to psychedelic guitar sorcery, Cline, Liebbig and Golia's soprano sax opening the way for Hammond to riff off the rhythm. "Hopped up on Adrenaline" rings true to its name, a showcase for Golia flute work with more than a passing nod to Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson. "Telescoping" is a free-formish respite evolving into the more anthemic "Run Run IbeX!" before Golia's tenor saxophone sets the course for an incredibly frenetic trilogy of "This Goes with your Leather", "She Gets Her Wine from a Box" and "Tricycle. The title track is an overly long, out-of-place elegiac improv vehicle, which eventually builds to a tension-filled crescendo before the all-too-short "Goodnight Lola" uses an ethereally beautiful backdrop of singing bowls backdrop to grant Hammond a harmonically graceful exit.

For more information, visit prescottrecordings.blogspot.com. Hammond is at Spectrum Nov. 8th, Downtown Music Gallery Nov. 10th and Ibeam Brooklyn Nov. 11th. See Calendar.



Chorale

Kirk Knuffke (SteepleChase)
by David R. Adler

Cornet specialists aren't in huge supply, but Kirk Knuffke stands out among this unique lot for his versatility and expressive depth. He's explored Steve

Lacy's music with Ideal Bread, the Lennie Tristano legacy with Ted Brown and Monk, Ellington and Mingus in duets with pianist Jesse Stacken. His sideman work with Matt Wilson, Jon Irabagon and others is vigorous and surefooted. *Chorale*, Knuffke's fourth outing as a leader, finds him in a brilliant lineup with pianist Russ Lossing, bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Billy Hart. It's striking that the nine original pieces all have one-word titles save for the closing "Good Good", which playfully shifts from uptempo to half-time swing.

Striving to balance the written and freely improvised, Knuffke opens with the former, a plaintive rubato invention called "Wingy". Hart's drumming is identifiable within the first minute and its appeal only grows from there, giving more tempo-based pieces such as "Kettle", "Standing" and "School" a sense of dynamic flux and timbral oddity. "Madly" revives the hovering feel of the opener but in a much freer context; it's the longest piece of the set, moving through passages of near silence and ending with Lossing's fiery unaccompanied piano. The transition from there to "Match" is pretty magical: Lossing is out for the first two minutes while Formanek states a steady bassline and Hart plays hypnotic tom-toms, moving to more jazz-like sticks and cymbals the very moment the piano comes in.

The blend of cornet, bowed bass and piano on the title track does, in fact, suggest a chorale. This bit of lyrical and offbeat chamber-jazz, rather unlike the album's other material, yields to free rubato interplay and yet somehow preserves the feeling and direction of the opening statement. It's the strongest evidence of the band's profound intuitive connection.

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk. Knuffke is at Korzo Nov. 12th with Matt Pavolka and Cornelia Street Café Nov. 20th with Ideal Bread. See Calendar.

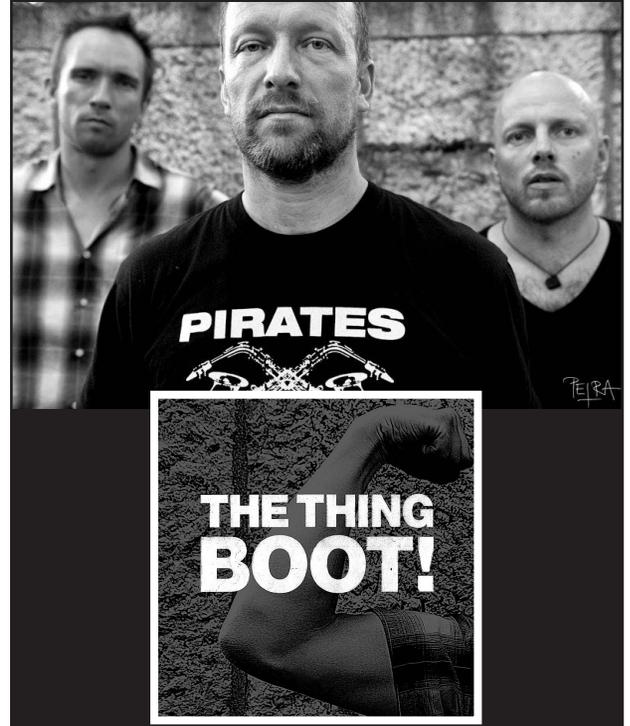
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