



Awayland
Urbana (Infrequent Seams)
Fountain of Youth
Colonic Youth (Infrequent Seams)
Floorplan I
James Ilgenfritz (Infrequent Seams)
 by Kurt Gottschalk

The downside of digital downloads is that information (titles, players) is easily lost. The upside is that searching for the information online can overturn unexpected stones. For example, while looking for details on bassist James Ilgenfritz' new round of releases on his own Infrequent Seams imprint, this reviewer came upon a quote by composer Travis Just (from the book *Arcana VII*) that Ilgenfritz had posted to his Facebook page the day before: "The obsession with classifying (or rather denying inclusion to) something as opera or not, improvisation or not, punk rock or not, jazz or not, theater or not, singing or not is a tired excuse and a tactic to avoid engaging with the work in question." While not a replacement for album credits (which were ultimately forthcoming), it provided a useful compass for the discs. They could be classified, individually, as jazz, noise and classical. But that would be an avoidance of engaging with the work.

The "jazz" one is by a versatile quintet called Urbana, which smoothly covers a lot of ground over the eight tracks of *Awayland*. There are touches of klezmer, sections of shifting time and themes that harken back to soul jazz and earlier grooves. It's a wonderfully warm album with a strong group dynamic, which allows it to keep a band identity while moving through different settings. At the same time, the diversity of instrumental voices keeps the tunes sounding fresh. Bryan Pardo's clarinet and Evan Mazunik's Fender Rhodes (they also play, respectively, alto sax and piano) and Frantz Loriot's viola give bright voice to the compositions, contributed by four of the five members of the group.

Were we given to classifying, *Fountain of Youth* by the quartet Colonic Youth, might be filed under "noise" or "free jazz", depending more than anything else on listener predilections. Either way it screams away with Daniel Blake's sometimes piercing soprano saxophone and Philip White's gurgling and squelching electronics vying for attention. Kevin Shea's unsurprisingly manic drumming here tends toward quick runs and jabs, leaving the bottom end open much of the time for Ilgenfritz' bass and it's nice to hear his solid, unassuming playing so plainly. Overall, it's something of an assault although there's much going on within the onslaught. In White's electronics especially there is a surprising amount of playing off of the sax while running tandem lines underneath—as if he were both trumpet and piano but glitched out and if this were classified as a jazz band, which it's not. It's heavier stuff than *Awayland* to be sure, but the mass doesn't mean a lack of detail.

In that regard, *Fountain of Youth* may be seen as having a complexity-within-chaos reminiscent of some of the wilder works of Anthony Braxton, another musician who invites and defies category. Ilgenfritz has worked with Braxton and, in 2012, he released an album of interpretations of Braxton's music for solo bass. *Floorplan I* is reminiscent of that disc in tone and recalls Braxton as well in conceptual structure. The disc is a three-movement site-specific piece not only written for the location but using the floorplan (hence the name) as a compositional guide. Played by Ilgenfritz and Dominic Lash on basses and Braxton regular Aaron Siegel on percussion, it's a slow and permeable quarter-hour of music. The location,

although unnamed, is important here as it provides a wonderful, rich resonance to the recording. While it is a scored piece, the score calls for a lot of decision-making by the performers, bringing in elements of improvisation and spontaneity. It is, in other words, an engaging and not easily classifiable piece of work.

For more information, visit infrequentseams.bandcamp.com. Ilgenfritz is at Spectrum Dec. 3rd, The Firehouse Space Dec. 4th, Ze Couch Dec. 14th, JACK Dec. 15th with Andrew Barker, Brooklyn Conservatory of Music Dec. 19th both as a leader and with RIBS and Trans Pecos Dec. 22nd with Colonic Youth. See Calendar.



Golden State
Greg Cohen (Relative Pitch)
New Folks
Philip Catherine/Martin Wind Duo Art (ACT Music)
 by George Kanzler

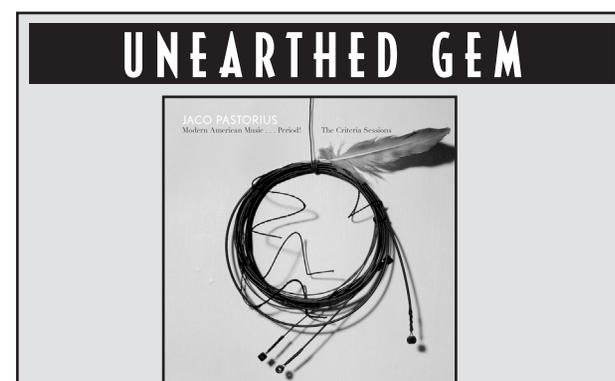
The ACT label series that gives *New Folks* its subtitle, *Duo Art*, could easily describe both these albums, empathetically exemplary expressions of the art by a pair of bassists and guitarists. Both albums feature a mix of originals and standards and amplified and/or electric guitars, but they give off very different vibes. Bassist Greg Cohen with guitarist Bill Frisell is a low-key, intimate encounter exuding spontaneity and a sunny, relaxed feel—very California, in keeping with Cohen's theme, his early years growing up in the Golden State. In contrast, guitarist Philip Catherine and bassist Martin Wind present an expansive program, one that explores a wider sonic and stylistic variety, displaying commanding virtuosity—and an empathy developed during a short concert tour before recording. Both duos feature fresh, revelatory takes of what we'd normally consider overly done jazz standards: "Robbin's Nest" on *Golden State* and "Blues in the Closet" on *New Folks*.

On Cohen's album, Frisell employs very few electric guitar effects except for a bit of a country-western twang and slight sustain. On some tracks he sounds as if he's channeling the late country guitar giant Chet Atkins. That sound is most pronounced on Cohen's more overtly California country honky-tonk tunes, like "Old Gravenstein" or "Fino Mornasco", with its echoes of "On Top of Old Smokey" and dreamy country flavor. They also give a Tex-Mex bounce to "South of the Border", skipping bass dialoguing with twangy guitar. While Cohen sticks to pizzicato throughout, the two string players interweave lines and exchange leads seamlessly, at times slipping into exhilarating duologues, most notably on Cohen's "Benitoite Blue", with a pointillist opening, and "California Here I Come", at a slower than usual tempo and featuring shifting leads, counterpoint and tandem soloing.

Catherine and Wind begin in similar low-key interactive mode, limning an autumnal version of "Old Folks" projected through a feeling of dappled sunlight, tempo slow walking and notes carefully placed, with minimal filigree and guitar employing a classic, understated amplified jazz sound. At the other end of the wide spectrum of guitar approaches—including rich, sustained tones on electric—is the aforementioned Oscar Pettiford's "Blues in the Closet", opening with guitar feedback, the melody continuing in fuzz tones through a solo, then chuffing electric chords behind a bass solo. Paul McCartney's "Jenny Wren" gets an amplified steel string reading; Catherine's "Pivione" features snappy plucking effects and Catherine vocally

harmonizes—à la George Benson—with his electric chording and strumming on Dexter Gordon's "Fried Bananas". Wind's "Song for D" is a rich, romantic ballad with heroic tones and chords from the pair culminating in a processional climax. His bass opens Hank Jones' "Sublime" pizzicato with the theme and first solo, then picks up the pace for the prickly guitar solo before returning to the theme arco to take it out. He also bows the melody of Hoagy Carmichael's "Winter Moon", then plucks behind the guitar solo.

For more information, visit relativepitchrecords.com and actmusic.com. Wind is at Smalls Dec. 26th-27th with Ken Peplowski. See Calendar.



UNEARTHED GEM
Modern American Music... Period!
The Criteria Sessions
Jaco Pastorius (Omnivore)
 by Terrell Holmes

Jaco Pastorius (1951-87) was an electric bassist whose inimitable sound was defined by riffs played at hummingbird velocity and embroidered with harmonic bursts as expressive as exclamation points. Pastorius' major breakthrough was the self-titled album he released in 1976; *Modern American Music... Period! The Criteria Sessions* is the demo recording of the sessions that would become that first album and provide insight into Pastorius' musical development.

The demo, like the album, opens with Pastorius' stellar performance of Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee", Pastorius alone without Don Alias on congas and the final note allowed to fade away completely instead of being choked off by the loud intrusion of "Come On, Come Over" that happens on the finished album. Pastorius' virtuoso performance of "Balloon Song (12-Tone)" has the sound of someone who needs the door to crack open just enough to make a breakthrough while "Time Lapse" is a frenetic four-minute vamp that feels like compulsory exercises. "Pans #1", with Othello Molineaux and Sir Cederik Lucious on steel drums, recalls Pastorius' time playing gigs aboard Caribbean cruise ships. There's a medley of "Havona" (which would wind up on the Weather Report classic *Heavy Weather*) and haunting "Continuum", which made the debut album. There's also a stand-alone version of the latter closer in style to the album version.

There are a couple of instances where the demos improve on the album. "Kuru" is neither enhanced with the strings nor paired with Herbie Hancock's "Speak Like A Child" and it has a plainness and simplicity more satisfying than the sleek finished product. The opposite is true, however, for "Opus Pocus", listed on the demo as "Opus Pocus (Pans #2)". The character is essentially the same but the final version is far more developed and satisfying.

Almost three decades after his tragic death, Jaco Pastorius is still the standard by which electric bassplayers are judged. He firmly believed that he was the world's greatest and that nothing was beyond his reach. And musically, at least, he was certainly right.

For more information, visit omnivorerecordings.com