



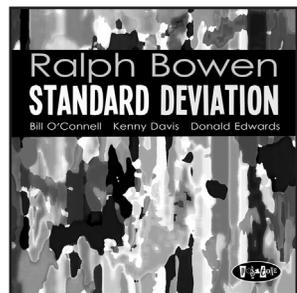
Book of Three: Continuum (2012)
Taylor Ho Bynum/John Hébert/Gerald Cleaver
(Relative Pitch)
by John Sharpe

Trios figure large in the output of the New York City-based imprint Relative Pitch, but few can be both as enthralling yet, on the face of it, unassuming as *Book of Three*. Comprising a triumvirate of seasoned improvisers in cornet player Taylor Ho Bynum, bassist John Hébert and drummer Gerald Cleaver, the band's sophomore outing matches well up to the standard set by their eponymous 2011 disc on RogueArt. While the first featured a wholly original program, this time out they offer a mix of covers, group improvisations and one original in a 56-minute studio session.

However, it's easy to miss the compositional elements as they cunningly blend charts and extemporization until it becomes impossible to separate them and it is so gloriously done that it doesn't matter anyway. While Bynum usually carries the melody, imbued with a seen-it-all-before-but-still-hopeful lyricism, they remain nonetheless an egalitarian collective at heart. Hébert moves astutely between vamp and nuanced commentary, as evidenced on Jim Hobbs' eastern flavored "Aware of Vacuity" while Cleaver confirms himself a master in the art of carving out a place for rhythmic detail amid open settings yet not shutting down options for exploration.

Close attention reveals Bynum reveling in liquid flutters and whistles atop the loose-limbed swing of fellow cornet player Bobby Bradford's "Comin' On", then later echoing erstwhile employer Bill Dixon's painterly smears in a breathy high register during the choppy group effort "Journal Square Complications". Cohesion is a given, demonstrated nowhere better than in the jostling interplay between bass and drums introducing Cleaver's "Henry", a melancholy ballad line, reprised in a low key exposition after the atmospheric sustain of closer "Precoda". Like their debut, this excellent set demands repeated listening, divulging more understated treasures on each pass.

For more information, visit relativepitchrecords.com. Hébert is at *Smalls* Jul. 2nd with Jeff Williams, *Village Vanguard* Jul. 15th-20th with Fred Hersch and Clemente Soto Velez *Cultural* Jul. 30th. Bynum is at *The Stone* Jul. 12th. Cleaver is at *Cornelia Street Café* Jul. 10th-12th with Mario Pavone. See *Calendar*.



Standard Deviation
Ralph Bowen (Posi-Tone)
by Ken Dryden

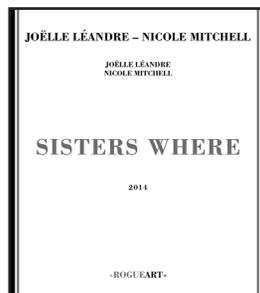
Ralph Bowen was drawn to music early, studying piano, clarinet and finally tenor saxophone in his youth and already playing professionally by the age of 13. He began to make his mark in the late '80s with *Out of the Blue*, an all-star group of young lions, which made several recordings for Blue Note. After the group disbanded, he appeared on CDs by various bandmates

like Ralph Peterson, Renee Rosnes and Kenny Garrett. Since then he has worked with Benny Carter, Hank Jones, Kenny Barron, Jon Faddis and the Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra, to name just a few.

Standard Deviation is Bowen's tenth CD as a leader and fifth for Posi-tone. The saxophonist interprets eight timeless standards, each with a fresh approach, ably supported by pianist Bill O'Connell, bassist Kenny Davis and drummer Donald Edwards.

His expressive detour from the usual paths makes up the centerpiece to his setting of "Isn't It Romantic" while O'Connell's strident, intricate solo marks a veteran soloist also worthy of greater recognition. Stan Getz may have set the standard for tenor players who tackle "Yesterdays", but Bowen gets points for originality with his choppy rendition (arranged by O'Connell), which begins in the midst of the famous theme. "You Don't Know What Love Is" has always been an emotional ballad and everything comes together perfectly in this brilliant scoring by the pianist: Bowen's almost vocal-like solo; O'Connell's thoughtful backing; and superb work by Davis and Edwards in the background. "Spring is Here" is full of surprising moments, opening with a tense vamp, a brief partial theme statement by the leader, then a sudden shift to feature both O'Connell and Davis at length. No calculations are needed to determine that *Standard Deviation* is a rewarding record date.

For more information, visit posi-tone.com. Bowen is at *Smalls* Jul. 3rd as a leader and 18th with Bob DeVos. See *Calendar*.



Sisters Where
Joëlle Léandre/Nicole Mitchell (RogueArt)
by Clifford Allen

While one might initially think the duet pairing of contrabass and flute an odd one, sounds find a natural balance between contrasts of wood and metal or breath and body. The instrumentation on *Sisters Where* does have a history—in 20th century performance the work of bassist Bertram Turetzky and his wife, flutist Nancy Turetzky, looms large. There are also the weighty improvised pairings of Polish bassist Jacek Bednarek and flutist Krzysztof Zgraja. While contemporary literature might be a good place to start with this captivating program of duets between French bassist Joëlle Léandre and California-via-Chicago flutist Nicole Mitchell, there's a lot more to this set than categories. A formidable improviser, in addition to her bow and firearms, Léandre's palette is abetted by her voice in alto cries and expressionist laments that grant harmonic minefields a poetically human quality.

She and Mitchell first worked together in 2009 in a trio with Canadian drummer Dylan van der Schyff, the fruits of which were released as *Before After* (RogueArt). However, no additional motor is needed on these six improvisations, wherein Mitchell's expanded technique of hummed and blown, often circular-breathed, multiphonics sidestep and are intertwined with Léandre's flitting masses. By the time "Sisters on Mercury" emerges at around 15 minutes, what was initially a fascinating study in dialogue becomes a clearly shared language and, while stemming from planetary fire, the pair tinder a slow shared burn before popping and snapping with pizzicato thwacks and percussive, non-lyric vocal spatter. The following "Sisters on Mars" enters with cracking lumber, Léandre

worrying the neck as bedrock to Mitchell's eliding flights before erupting in bluesy arco surges and hymnal vocal exhortations, supporting transverse purrs and polyhedral accents. "Sisters on Saturn" is unified through the beguiling color of complementary harmonics, but it is the throaty, droning pulse that Léandre metes out in graduated viciousness that moves their improvisation towards the stratosphere. Recorded in a small, salon-like environment before a live audience, *Sisters Where* is a raw and honest document of six extraordinary conversations.

For more information, visit web.roguart.com. Mitchell is at *The Stone* Jul. 3rd with Geri Allen. See *Calendar*.

UNEARTHED GEM



Toronto 1947
Illinois Jacquet/Leo Parker (Uptown)
by Ken Dryden

Illinois Jacquet became known for his rousing tenor saxophone solo in Lionel Hampton's signature version of "Flyin' Home", considered to be one of the earliest R&B sax solos, though he made many equally valuable records under his own name. Jacquet, who died a decade ago this month, remained a potent soloist throughout his career, serving a stint with Count Basie and becoming a part of the Jazz at the Philharmonic touring allstars. His early years as a leader haven't been widely documented on recordings, so the discovery of this previously unissued concert of a 1947 show adds to his legacy. His band at the time included his older brother Russell and Joe Newman on trumpets (the latter taking most of the solos), baritone saxophonist Leo Parker (in his only known live recording), pianist Sir Charles Thompson, bassist Al Lucas and drummer Shadow Wilson. The music is a blend of swing, bop and a foreshadowing of rhythm and blues.

An enthusiastic crowd is audible throughout this concert and it seems likely that there was dancing in the aisles as well. The sound is more than acceptable for a vintage live recording and Bob Porter's extensive liner notes provide plenty of background. Jacquet wows the crowd from the very start with a spirited take on his theme song, "Bottoms Up". The saxophonist's jump tune "Music Hall Beat" features the leader, Newman's swing-flavored trumpet, a rousing effort by Parker (in a rare opportunity to hear him in an extended solo in front of an audience) and then the very underrated (and still active) Thompson. Jacquet has no problem making "Body and Soul" his own with a rhapsodic, hard-blowing interpretation, complete with an extended coda. The Jacquet brothers penned the whimsical blues "Throw It Out of Your Mind Baby", showcasing a rare vocal by Russell, with Newman's sassy muted trumpet backing him. Jacquet and Thompson's "Robbins' Nest" would become a jazz standard; this foot-patting version has the rhythmic pacing of Basie while Thompson's intricate solo is frequently interrupted by screaming. This CD is a valuable addition to Jacquet's discography.

For more information, visit uptownrecords.net. A Jacquet tribute is at *Damrosch Park* Jul. 12th. See *Calendar*.