



Blue, Vol. 2
Jeff "Tain" Watts (Dark Key Music)
 by Terrell Holmes

Jeff "Tain" Watts, drummer *par excellence*, enhances his legacy with *Blue, Vol. 2*, which builds on and expands the themes and genres of the excellent first volume. Watts composed and arranged all of the songs and his core band of guitarist Paul Bollenback, pianist James Francies, bassist Orlando le Fleming and tenor saxophonist Troy Roberts swing with aplomb.

Watts' writing and playing sample various genres but, as the title suggests, everything flows from the blues. Opener "Chicken Ballet" combines earthy blues with high-energy hardbop and includes one of Watts' composing trademarks, as faithful as a Hitchcock cameo: switching between two different time signatures at various times, like a car accelerating and decelerating.

Alto saxophone superstar Steve Coleman joins Watts and bassist Robert Hurst in a formidable trio on the funky "uh-UH!!", the balance and timing among these vets defining textbook jazz. The warm, relaxed "Cleo" is also a trio track, this time with bassist Dwayne Dolphin and guitarist (and fellow *Tonight Show* alum) Kevin Eubanks meshing beautifully.

Harmonica sensation Grégoire Maret stars on "14E", with its undulating, evocative rhythm while Russell Malone's honey-smooth guitar and Dayna Stephens' impassioned tenor saxophone energize Watts' majestic arrangement of the traditional song "Water". In addition to all of the brand-name talent, Watts showcases some exciting young players: pianist Osmany Paredes and bassist Yunior Terry Cabrera work out fiercely on the ostinato-driven burner "Sons of the Jitney Man", spurred on by Stephens' tenor and Watts' typically ferocious and sophisticated drumming. This quartet also throws down on the dynamic and hilariously titled "Blakzilla vs. Yo'Mothra".

Watts has always been a fine composer but his talent as a lyricist shouldn't be overlooked. Vocalist Sy Smith infuses the infectious "Lenalane" with a vocalese style and lighthearted mischief. Watts can also lay down a serious love ballad, Kurt Elling lending his earnest voice to "You're Mine and I Want You", confessing his love amid the tender piano of Manuel Valera. "Waltz for Marvin" is a contemporary journey through the inner city blues, a bridge linking Marvin Gaye's pain and prophecy from *What's Going On* to the current social scene, expressed through the bemused but effective singing of Frank McComb. With *Blue, Vol. 2* Watts has added another impressive chapter to his oeuvre.

For more information, visit tainish.com



NOW
Pierre Favre DrumSights (Intakt)
 by Ken Waxman

Undoubtedly the first all-percussion group was formed when our distant ancestors began collectively

banging on reverberating surfaces. Since then drum ensembles have become more sophisticated and inventive. Active from 1970-92, Max Roach's M'Boom was the most notable all-percussion ensemble in jazz and improvised music. Taking sticks—and brushes—into his own hands, Swiss percussionist Pierre Favre made an international variation on that theme with *Singing Drums* (ECM, 1984), featuring Brazilian Nana Vasconcelos, American Paul Motian and fellow Swiss Fredy Studer. *NOW* is the most recent, now all-Swiss, iteration of this ensemble, with Chris Jaeger, Markus Lauterburg and Valeria Zangger filling the other stools.

Although Zangger has a notated music background while Jaeger and Lauterburg are experienced improvisers working in earlier Favre percussion ensembles, no fissure is apparent on the 12 tracks. And despite Favre composing the major statements, this is primarily group music, with the rhythmically complex results both sonorous and percussive. On "Tramping", for instance, the friction created by slamming four bass drums in unison could reference troops marching. "Dance of the Feline" sounds more equine than feline with pops, plinks and rolls resembling hoof beats, the excitement level crescendoing in an intense dead-heat finish. Wood block and cymbal accents break up wire brush gymnastics on "Brushes Flock", but the timing and adroitness resemble tap dancers' art.

This newest chapter in Favre's on-going percussion discussion, combining the rugged intensity of African polyrhythms, boldness of theatrical underscoring and exquisite between-the-beat sophistication of jazz, will interest more than drummers. Who says you can't follow the beat of a different drum?

For more information, visit intaktrec.ch



Meets The Danish Radio Big Band
Charlie Watts (Impulse!)
 by George Kanzler

Best known as a founding member of The Rolling Stones, drummer Charlie Watts is also a fervent advocate of jazz whose lifelong side projects have included a tribute album to another Charlie: Parker. When Gerard Presencer, who has played in some of Watts' jazz bands, learned that Watts had spent time in Denmark back in the early '60s, he invited him to come and play with the Danish Radio Big Band that Presencer conducts. The result was recorded during a concert at the Danish Radio Concert Hall in October 2010.

One of the least flamboyant drummers in rock, Watts is just as self-effacing and rhythmically important as a big band jazz drummer. His only solo here occurs on the segue from Parts 1 to 2 of his and Jim Keltner's "Elvin Suite", 40-plus seconds that revs up the tempo and feel from the ballad stroll of "Part 1" to the Elvin Jones-like shuffle that powers "Part 2", Watts propelling Uffe Markussen's roiling tenor saxophone solo. Presencer, who arranged six of the seven tracks, reimagines three Stones classics. "(Satis) Faction" rides the slow surf of an AfroSamba with electric bass joining the rhythm section, Presencer playing the familiar melody on flugelhorn and Lars Møller's tenor taking it up and out. Hammond organ enhances an R'n'B backbeat on "You Can't Always Get What You Want", Presencer again stating the melody and sharing solo space with Pernille Bevort's bright soprano. The big band's detailed command of dynamics, tones and timbres turns "Paint It Black" technicolor, Watts

favoring brushes as Per Gade's guitar limns the melody and solos along with Presencer. "I Should Care" is cast as a gentle bossa featuring Steen Nikolaj Hansen's trombone. Capping off the album is "Molasses", a hard-swinging Joe Newman shuffle from the Woody Herman book, featuring the band's regular drummer and bassist in tandem with Watts and his longtime bassist partner David Green. The highlight of the solo rounds is Vincent Nilson's wah-wah trombone chorus. This album should help bring new listeners to one of the world's best jazz big bands, courtesy of one of rock's great drummers.

For more information, visit impulse-label.com

ON SCREEN

Michael Carvin: No Excuses
Oscar Sanders (Malcolm Entertainment)
 by Anders Griffen

This film captures master drummer Michael Carvin's Experience (tenor saxophonist Keith Loftis; pianist Yayoi Ikawa; bassist Jansen Cinco) live and in the studio as they are working toward the *Flash Forward* album (Motéma, 2014; Carvin's first album as a leader in almost a decade). The viewer hears from the musicians and others about the concept and process. Carvin also guides a tour around New York City, reminiscing about various venues, many of which no longer exist.

After some introductory material, the band is presented outdoors at Marcus Garvey Park before an enthusiastic crowd. The live sound is somewhat dispersed, but the music comes through and there's a bit more presence when the camera follows them into the studio. "You Stepped Out of a Dream" is a highlight as Carvin leads the band through his arrangements of classic material and it's great to hear his younger charges' feelings about his professionalism and influence. Album producer Camille Gainer Jones adds valuable insight.

The tour of Manhattan performance venues is fabulous. Starting at Carnegie Hall, Carvin recalls performing there with Dizzy Gillespie. Across the street is CAMI Hall, where he featured his students in an end-of-year showcase. We also visit The Village Vanguard, "where it all started", as well as the former locations of Sweet Basil, The Village Gate, The Lush Life, Tin Palace, The Baby Grand, Sutton's, Lenox Lounge and Boomer's, where [saxophonist] Sonny Carrington asked if his young daughter could sit-in (fans of the music know her today as drummer Terri Lyne Carrington). Carvin reminisces about engagements with Illinois Jacquet, James Moody, Benny Carter and Abbey Lincoln, among others.

There are some digital effects used throughout the film that may divide viewers: distracting or innocuous? In any case, the story is strong and by the end, one feels the collaboration between the musician and filmmaker. This project came about as a result of Carvin's participation in Sanders' previous jazz documentary, *Billy Bang: Long Over Due*, and is another inspired undertaking.

For more information, visit malcolmentertainment.com.
Carvin is at The Cell May 20th. See Calendar.