



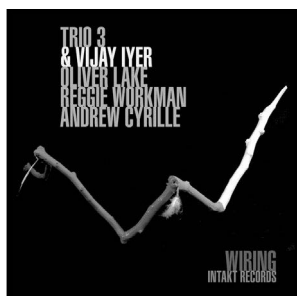
Live at The Breeding Ground
Brandee Younger 4Tet (s/r)
by Russ Musto

Rarely employed as a lead instrument in mainstream jazz, the harp has nonetheless proven to be an engaging voice in the music via both Dorothy Ashby and Alice Coltrane. On her debut disc as a leader, Brandee Younger shows herself to be a most worthy successor to those two artists with a program paying homage to her predecessors, expanding upon their foundations to give the chordophone a distinctly modern sound.

Leading a versatile ensemble of Dezron Douglas (basses), E.J. Strickland (drums) and Chelsea Baratz (tenor saxophone), Younger opens with two numbers from Ashby's groundbreaking '60s catalogue. Richard Evans' "Soul Vibrations" takes an exotic turn with Strickland laying down an East Indian-sounding beat and Douglas playing a dramatic electric bassline under Younger and Baratz' harmonized lead melody. Ashby's "Wax and Wane" begins with the leader playing in the instrument's lower register, sounding much like a Delta blues guitar over galloping electric bass as Baratz stretches out with a powerful guttural tone.

Younger proves herself to be a skilled composer with three original songs, beginning with "The Essence of Ruby", an emotional piece that evinces romance and melancholy within a decidedly funky atmosphere, rousing an impassioned solo from Baratz. She is replaced by Stacy Dillard on soprano for "Hortense", a rhythmic outing with stellar solos by both the saxophonist and leader. "Respected Destroyer" starts off powerfully with Baratz back on tenor, but soon softens into an appealing melody, which inspires moving statements from both the saxophonist and composer. Ashby is again celebrated with a reading of her "Games" and Alice Coltrane is feted on her own "Blue Nile". Younger's "He Has A Name (Awareness)" also exhibits the powerful spiritual influence of the latter's music, with Dillard on soprano, who remains for the exciting closer, pianist Stanley Cowell's "Effi".

For more information, visit brandeeyounger.com. Younger is at *The Bitter End* Jan. 9th as part of *Winter Jazzfest*, *Town Hall* Jan. 13 as part of a *Charlie Haden* tribute and *Minton's* Jan. 25th. See *Calendar*.



Wiring
Trio 3 + Vijay Iyer (Intakt)
by Phil Freeman

In these parlous times, the question of how to bring new listeners to jazz keeps many musicians awake nights. The liner notes to this album, written by the late Amiri Baraka and published posthumously, begin in a manner so hilariously unhelpful in this regard they can almost be seen as trolling from beyond the grave. "If you want to hear real music not some kind of shallow 'entertainment' this is your number," writes Baraka. Admittedly, he then describes the players—

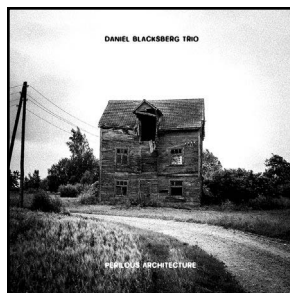
alto saxophonist Oliver Lake, pianist Vijay Iyer, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Andrew Cyrille—as "four great musicians trying to change your world", which is nice, but the positioning of jazz as 'real music' in fundamental opposition to 'entertainment' has been precisely the problem since at least the '60s. As the joke goes, people don't like jazz, they appreciate it.

But there's much to like here—indeed, the opening cut, "The Prowl", is pure entertainment, a kind of modal strut driven by Workman's thunder-stick bass work and Iyer's bricklayer chords. In a similar vein, the quartet sway like dancing bears through pianist Curtis Clark's "Chiara" and the disc's closing track, "Tribute to Bu", begins as a drum solo, but Lake enters two minutes in, briefly turning it into a ferocious duo.

Iyer contributes a lot to the album, most notably the three-part, 18-minute "Suite for Trayvon (And Thousands More)", which for much of its running time has a mournful, marching cadence suited to its dedicatee, making its faster, harder-swinging section feel like an outburst of justified rage.

The album falls short in its more abstract moments, as on "Synapse II" and "Willow Song"; the way Lake chews through his lines on the latter track recalls David S. Ware's ability to sledgehammer a ballad into the ground, but without the late tenor saxophonist's airplane-hangar-sized tone. Ultimately, *Wiring* is at its best the closer it comes to embracing conventional melody and being, yes, entertaining.

For more information, visit intaktrec.ch. Trio 3 is at *Minetta Lane Theatre* Jan. 9th as part of *Winter Jazzfest*. See *Calendar*.



Perilous Architecture
Daniel Blacksberg Trio (NoBusiness)
by David R. Adler

Trombonist Daniel Blacksberg is one of Philadelphia's bright lights: an in-demand klezmer player, member of Anthony Braxton's Tri-Centric Orchestra and partner in the experimental projects Archer Spade and Electric Simcha, among others. *Perilous Architecture* is his second outing in a trombone-bass-drums setting, following up the 2010 NoBusiness session *Bit Heads*.

There's a balance of openness and coherence in Blacksberg's music with bassist Matt Engle and drummer Mike Szekely that is never less than striking. Written themes emerge and still seem somehow off-the-cuff; later they return to close out the pieces in a way that could almost be called traditional. That's the way with much 'free' music: there's more structure than is obviously apparent and Blacksberg has a way of heightening that tension, prompting trio interplay that is elbow-jabbing yet subtly shaded.

"Arc of Circling Bodies" starts the session with low multiphonic trombone growls that end up becoming a formal element, alternating with a more precise theme from the full trio. "Filament and Void" takes wide leaping intervals as its starting point and seems to have a more defined harmonic plan, despite its blustery moments. "Roar of Mankind" is more aggressive still, but it carries that thread of a theme, that inescapable logic at the heart of Blacksberg's work.

In purely instrumental terms, "Scapegrace" is Blacksberg's best trombone on *Perilous Architecture* and also Engle's most satisfying bass feature. Is there the slightest hint of Thelonious Monk's "In Walked Bud" lurking in the main motive? In any event, there's a sense of swing and groove, however camouflaged, and

a rousing polyphonic passage toward the end that sets this track apart. "Blind Tracery" features Engle prominently as well, arco all the way through, and the piece seems to calm the waters, with a beautifully executed drop in volume in the final minutes. "Almost Negotiable", the closer, might be called the party track—quicker, riffer, agitated, more staccato. A distant though discernible echo of klezmer? Possibly, though Blacksberg plays doom metal too. The trio gives a strong sense of his musical breadth, even as it hews to a specific Loft-jazz aesthetic.

For more information, visit nobusinessrecords.com. Blacksberg is at *ShapeShifter Lab* Jan. 9th. See *Calendar*.

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