

GLOBE UNITY: TURKEY



**Live at Tarcento Jazz
konstruKt (Holidays)
whatsnext?
Mehmet Ali Sanlikol (DÜNYA)
Climate Change
Burak Kaya (Weplay)
by Tom Greenland**

Turkish musics, like jazz, have long been influenced by the traffic of traders and travelers on indigenous artistry. Three recent albums show three very different styles of Turkish jazz.

Recorded live in Italy on Jul. 18th, 2014, *Live at Tarcento Jazz* captures (most of) the freeform quartet konstruKt's dynamic appearance. Stirred by drummer Korhan Argüden's restless ride cymbal and throbbing toms, which form the sonic bedrock for alto saxophonist Korhan Futaci's probing cries, the Istanbul-based group sustains an energy level comparable to John Coltrane's extended forays with Elvin Jones. Bassist Özün Usta provides support through a combination of pizzicato and arco passages, often forcing upper partials from pitches with his forceful bowing while Umat Çağlar switches off between electric guitar, Farfisa organ, tape echo effects and several woodwinds. When he and Futaci both play zurna (Turkish oboe) or when his ney (end-blown flute) is juxtaposed against Futaci's high-pitched fife or siren-like slide-whistle, they create a distinctively Anatolian sonic thumbprint.

Bursa-born composer and multi-instrumentalist Mehmet Ali Sanlikol moved to Boston to study jazz, later returning to his native music, a broadened focus reflected on *whatsnext?*, his big-band album mixing Third Stream compositional ideas (think Gil Evans, Bob Brookmeyer) with Turkish makamlar and usûller (modal and rhythmic systems) and instruments, including zurna, ney, kös and nekkare (large and small kettledrums) and rebab (spiked fiddle). An ambitious composer and prodigious technician, Sanlikol's music is neither jazz nor (Turkish) classical, but something in between. His playing on tracks like "A Violet Longing", where he doubles the keyboard solo with vocal scatting, is jaw-dropping, but overall the project is only partially successful, begging further investigation.

Guitarist Burak Kaya's *Climate Change* is a self-produced "message album" designed to heighten awareness of humans' destruction of the ecosystem, adorned with 13-year-old Filipino artist Trisha Co Reyes' provocative painting of a young girl drawing aside black and white curtains covered with images of pollution to reveal a colorful utopia of birds and beasts. Like the painting, Kaya's chord changes are lush and chromatic, evidently inspired by Brazilian bossa nova and rendered with a delicate touch on classical guitar. Supported by the fleet-fingered bass playing of Ozan Musluoğlu, whose solos provide some of the album's more dramatic moments, and minimalist hand percussion of Yinon Muallem, Kaya's gentle compositions ebb and flow like waves on a beach, but would profit from more of the dark tension represented by the fish skeletons and noxious fumes on the curtains of Co Reyes' painting—tension hinted at, but insufficiently explored, on tracks like "Ağaçkesen Köprüsü (Tree Cutter Bridge)" and "Gerze".

For more information, visit holidaysrecords.it, dunyainc.org and burakkaya.com.tr



**Blue, Vol. 1
Jeff "Tain" Watts (Dark Key Music)
by Russ Musto**

Jeff "Tain" Watts confirms his standing as one of the most important drummers of his generation, mixing it up with more than a dozen sidemen on a program comprised of seven original compositions and two inventive arrangements of jazz classics. The veteran's composing and arranging are as personal as his uninhibited drumwork.

Opening up with Thelonious Monk's "Brilliant Corners", Watts drives his quartet of tenor saxophonist Troy Roberts, pianist David Budway and bassist Neal Caine through a series of rhythm and tempo changes—slow funky backbeat of the piece's introduction; deliberate blues-drenched medium-paced reading of the melody; breakneck tempo of the solos—that would sorely test the mettle of lesser players. Roberts remains with pianist James Francies and bassist Orlando Le Fleming on "Farley Strange", a wildly rollicking jaunt on a New Orleans second line rhythm, which adds trumpeter Kenyatta Beasley, trombonist/tuba player Clark Gayton, guitarist Paul Bollenback, percussionist Luisito Quintero and a raucous vocal chorus.

The mood mellows for "May 15, 2011", a beautiful ballad spotlighting the vocal of Frank McComb alongside Osmany Paredes (piano), Henry Hey (keyboards), Mark Whitfield (guitar) and Christian McBride (bass). Things get wild again on Max Roach's "Driva Man", featuring Ku-umba Frank Lacy's raspy reading of Oscar Brown, Jr.'s lyric, and the slavery era theme continues on "Blues For Mr. Charley", a powerful quartet outing. Chromatic harmonica virtuoso Gregoire Maret steps into the spotlight on the next three tracks: "Faux Paul", a melancholic lament heightened by Maret's plaintive tone; "Flip and Dip", a folkish melody with harmonica and tenor in a impassioned conversation; and "Brainlifter", moving from a melodic start to a frenzied group improvisation. The date concludes with the opening quartet on "Reverie", a memorial to Watts' late mother beginning with the Sanctuary Studio church bell tolling.

For more information, visit tainish.com. This project is at *The Cutting Room Jun. 6th*. See Calendar.



**Coming of Age
Ben Williams (Concord)
by Brian Charette**

Bassist Ben Williams captured everyone's attention in 2009 when he won the Monk Institute competition. His resumé reads like someone twice his age: Wynton Marsalis, George Benson and Pat Metheny are just a few. Williams will even appear in the upcoming Miles Davis biopic alongside Don Cheadle. His 2011 Concord debut, *State of Art*, was critically acclaimed and *Coming of Age* is just as powerful. At the core of the project is Williams' working band Sound Effect: Marcus

Strickland (saxophones), Matthew Stevens (guitar), Christian Sands (piano) and John Davis (drums). Williams is an accomplished composer, his singable melodies supported by subtle, hip harmony. There are incredible guest artists on the album as well, trumpeter Christian Scott and vibraphonist Stefon Harris to name just two. Even a string quartet makes an appearance.

Disc opener "Black Villain Music" starts with dreamily phased Rhodes, killer groove and octave-jumping upright bass and the lyrical melody has a nice presentation with guitar and saxophone. "Strength and Beauty" is a rolling waltz with a halftime backbeat inspired by the grace of saxophonist Jimmy Greene. On "Voice of Freedom (For Mandela)", guest vocalist Goapele sings a gentle Afrobeat and is answered by a sweet, laid back unison riff. "Toy Soldiers" is Williams' take on the sacrifices of war, marching snare drum and repetitive piano creating a martial scene that gets a breath of air from the bass solo, Williams' lyrical playing sitting nicely against the static rhythm section backdrop. "Forecast" is a complex samba influenced by the Wayne Shorter composition "Over Shadow Hill Way". Gentle arpeggios and foggy strings are stirred by Sands' rolling two-fisted chords and Strickland takes a great soprano solo with amazing control and beautiful lines. Williams' tunes have so many intricate sections that melt into each other, only possible with a group that seems to sense each other telepathically.

Williams is one of the most important young jazz bassists on the scene and his maturity as a composer and versatility on electric and upright are impressive. Expect lots more from this great talent.

For more information, visit concordmusicgroup.com. Williams is at *Dizzy's Club Jun. 9th* with Jacques Schwarz-Bart and *Ginny's Supper Club Jun. 18th* with Christian Sands. See Calendar.

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