

“What’s up Blue Note,” Robert Glasper shouted out to the packed crowd. “This is the third night [Oct. 4th]—42 more shows to go,” he continued, counting down the number of sets remaining in his month-long residency, which would find him playing a wide range of music, from straightahead acoustic jazz to his new breed of funk-out fusion, with seven different units. Taking his place at the center of a battery of keyboards—Fender Rhodes electric piano, Yamaha Motif 7 and Korg Kronos Music Workstation—he introduced his two longtime bandmates, bass guitarist Derrick Hodge and drummer Chris Dave, engaging the pair with some entertaining repartee before settling in to the serious business of making music. “We’re gonna play some stuff and see where it takes us,” he told the audience and then laid down a legato Fender Rhodes chordal underpinning on top of which he played a linear melody on the Yamaha keyboard that mashed up his own “Beautiful” and Radiohead’s “Packt Like Sardines In A Crushd Tin Box”. This kicked off a 95-minute tripped-out ‘mixtape’ set full of surprising twists and turns. The trio engaged in a series of potent solo and collective improvisations around fragmented melodic lines, which included the leader’s “Ah Yeah” and “Calls”, Cyndi Lauper’s “Time After Time”, Duke Ellington’s “In A Sentimental Mood” and Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit”, wrapping them around looped samples of powerful James Baldwin and Nina Simone orations. —Russ Musto



Robert Glasper Trio @ Blue Note

In this era of feminist fight-back, the obvious statement made by the banding of Myra Melford (piano), Nicole Mitchell (flute) and Joëlle Léandre (bass) may be one of gender alone. In this period of reactionary divisiveness, jazz remains male-dominated as ever but these powerful soloists, unified in the creation of something greater than the sum of themselves, cast a timeless lesson in equity and strength. Veterans all of the most expansive contemporary music, Melford, Mitchell and Léandre took the stage at Teatro LATEA (Oct. 8th) without outlines of what was to come, guided only by the highest level of performance practice and most communicative listening. Refreshingly, there wasn’t any hogging of the spotlight or rushing toward a climax, but the Tiger Trio evoked enough energy, expression and force to justify the title and embark on compelling musical forays. Melford appeared at the top of her game; perhaps hindered by the limitations of an upright piano, her technical prowess nonetheless shaped a spinning tapestry. Mitchell alternately draped gorgeous melodies over and cut searing lines into the atmosphere. And Léandre’s tireless pizzicato patterns, arco passages, vocalizations and humor brought it together. The Tiger Trio may be the counter to the ignorance, impatience and greed in the nation’s daily feed. “We’re totally tuned in to each other,” Melford noted after the concert. But it was Mitchell’s comment that best describes what propels this vital music: “It’s a different kind of listening.” —John Pietaro



Tiger Trio @ Teatro LATEA

“We are here tonight celebrating the work of iconic women,” pianist Danilo Pérez announced to the sold-out house at Jazz Standard (Oct. 11th), introducing a thematic element to the compelling music that the collective quintet with saxophonist Chris Potter, trumpeter Avishai Cohen, bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Nate Smith would play that evening. Opening with his own “Alternate Reality”, dedicated to author/activist Angela Davis, Pérez began with a solo prelude that exhibited a striking originality, which, while rooted in tradition, swung on its own terms. The piece was propelled by the sprawling rhythms of Grenadier and Smith and powerfully elevated by the impassioned blowing of Potter and Cohen, each player feeding off the forward-moving improvising of the band to craft a narrative contour. Potter’s “Lament For Jo Jo”, inspired by a character from the Jesmyn Ward novel *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, melancholic in tone, continued the distinctively imaginative mood of the music. Plucked piano and bass strings lent an exotic flavor to “Innovation Africa”, Cohen’s homage to movement founder Sivan Ya’ari, trumpet and tenor blowing with harmonious dissonance over a gambling beat. Two more by Pérez, “And Still I Rise” and “Beloved”, the former a rhythmic dedication to poet Maya Angelou, the latter pensively fêting author Toni Morrison, closed the set. Calls for an encore brought the band back for Cohen’s reading of Israeli poet Zelda’s “Departure”. (RM)

The Sunday afternoon sky burned bright over the West Village, but an informed portion of those on Seventh Avenue South crowded readily into a certain darkened basement of note (Oct. 7th). The draw was the Angels Quartet and its masterful expansion of John Zorn’s 2004 *Masada Project*, an already expansive fusion of Jewish musical traditions, free funk and new jazz. Throughout its compelling set, the quartet’s interplay was marked with a celebratory collegiality and laughter that belied the Village Vanguard’s noir-like décor. The downtown sound was alive and well, wielding Klezmer-fueled collective improvisation, meter shifts, melodic minors, bouncing repetitions, hora accents and a bit of *klangfarbenmelodie*. Zorn’s artfully distressed alto saxophone wailed over the exquisite leads of guitarist Julian Lage, who showed again why he’s first-call for so many varied situations. The latter’s utter command of his instrument and ability to tear into complex melodies as easily as he dives into reckless abandon is all the more admirable by his spy and surf guitar mastery. The rhythm section of fluid bassist Jorge Roeder and drummer Kenny Wollesen was on fire throughout. Wollesen can do anything behind a kit and here rolled out the hippest bossa novas (with samba bottoms) and coolest free jazz. The sun was still shining at the end of the matinee show and the audience climbed up the Village Vanguard’s historic steps, still grooving on the leftover good vibes. (JP)

WHAT’S NEWS

2018’s Black Friday Record Store Day is Nov. 23rd.

John and Alice Coltrane’s home in Dix Hills, Long Island, was named a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, initiating a process of protecting and preserving the residence.

Vocalist Sheila Jordan was presented with the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation’s Satchmo Award in a ceremony last month at Harlem’s Alhambra Ballroom in recognition of her “important and lasting contributions in the world of music and jazz education.” For more information, visit louisarmstrongfoundation.org.

Finalists for the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition have been announced: Oleg Akkuratov, Gabrielle Cavassa, Olivia Chindamo, Toscha Comeaux and Laurin Talese. The finalists will compete for the grand prize Nov. 18th as part of the NJPAC James Moody Jazz Festival before a jury of Christian McBride, Nnenna Freelon, Mary Ann Topper, Sheila Anderson and Jon Faddis. For more information, visit njpac.org/events/detail/sarah-vaughan-competition.

During the annual general assembly of the European Jazz Network, member organizations supported the adoption of a new Manifesto on Gender Balance in Jazz and Creative Music, beginning with a research period of “balance of men and women in the members’ respective areas of work, festivals, concert series, participatory projects, and within their staff and Boards.” For more information, visit europejazzbalance.net.

The Annual Louis Armstrong House Museum Gala event will take place Nov. 28th at Capitale in Manhattan with a silent auction and presentation of the Louie Award to musician and philanthropist Herb Alpert. For more information, visit louisarmstronghouse.org. In related news, Ricky Ricciardi, Director of Research Collections for the Louis Armstrong House Museum and author of *What a Wonderful World: The Magic of Louis Armstrong’s Later Years*, will give a talk on Armstrong at Kumpferberg Center for the Arts at Queens College Nov. 13th at 7 pm.

Book release events for *Sophisticated Giant: Life and Legacy of Dexter Gordon*, written by Gordon’s widow Maxine Gordon and published by University of California Press, will take place at Greenlight Bookstore (Nov. 1st), McNally Jackson (Nov. 13th) and 92nd Street Y (Dec. 18th).

Drummer/composer William Hooker provided the solo soundtrack to the latest edition of the video game *Grand Theft Auto*.

Issue Project Room has named its 2019 Suzanne Fiol Curatorial Fellow: Benedict Nguyen. For more information, visit issueprojectroom.org.

The Monterey Jazz Festival (see our report on the most recent edition on pg. 13) has named its 2019 Artists-in-Residence: drummer Allison Miller and bassist Derrick Hodge. For more information, visit montereyjazzfestival.org

As part of the 2018 Johnny Pacheco Latin Music and Jazz Festival held Nov. 14th-16th at Lehman College, there will be daytime performances from 10 am-4 pm by student jazz and Latin jazz ensembles. For more information, visit lehman.edu/jazzfest/live-stream.php.

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