



bruce handy on culture

Four New Releases to Make You Love Jazz, the Kale of Music

by **Bruce Handy** 2:45 PM, MARCH 1 2013



BY DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS.

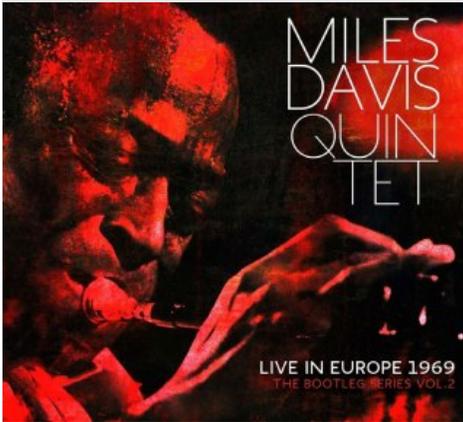
The ever-stylish Miles Davis, circa 1970.

Oscars, Oscars, Oscars. Pope, pope, pope. Sequestration. Bob Woodward. Side boobs.

Time to talk about something people really care about: jazz.

Ah, I wish. This is an art form many people love deeply, but most of the world regards it as homework—something you think you're supposed to appreciate but don't. Jazz, for many, is the kale of music. I forget where I heard or saw this—a *Simpsons* episode?—but I recall a joke about someone having "Didn't like jazz" inscribed on his or her tombstone, freed only in death to admit such a universal but closeted truth.

And with that, here are four fantastic new jazz releases even *you* will love (and, by the way, I love kale):



Miles Davis Quintet, *Live in Europe 1969: The Bootleg Series Vol 2.*

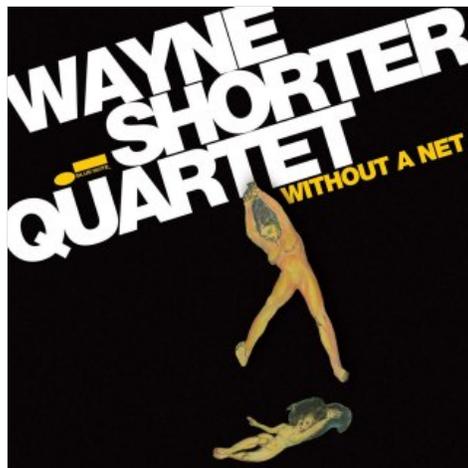
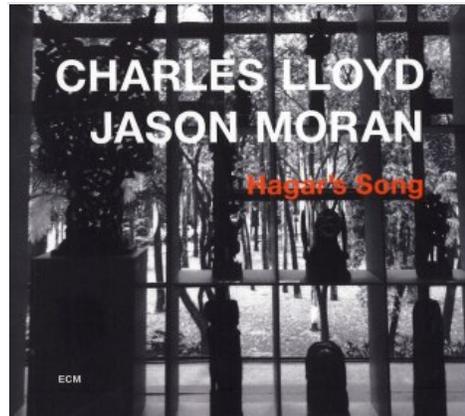
This is an important historical document, being the first—and perhaps final?—officially released recordings of what critics call Davis’s third great quintet, or “lost” quintet: Davis on trumpet, Chick Corea on piano, Wayne Shorter on saxophone, Dave Holland on bass, and Jack DeJohnette on drums. I say “lost” because they never made a proper studio recording together. Augmented by others, these musicians had played on earlier Davis sessions and would go on to record

the landmark jazz-rock album *Bitches Brew*, again as part of a larger group, but this is the only record of the group by itself, from dates in Antibes, Stockholm, and Berlin. Here, with Corea playing electric piano on most cuts but Holland on acoustic bass and no one on electric guitar, the group has one foot in *Bitches Brew* and the other in pretty much the entirety of Davis’s career up to that point. This is missing-link music—which, you know, does sound sort of homework-y. Forget I said anything. These are roiling, searching performances, by turns lyrical, aggressive, beautiful, bristling, propulsive—and exciting. This is the sound of musicians testing boundaries, if not yet crossing them, and it captures its era better than any music I can think of—although the Beatles’ *White Album*, released in late 1968, might be a point of pop comparison, sharing as it does a similar sense of fractured, virtuosic unease. This four-disc set includes a DVD of the quintet’s Berlin concert. As you can see, the threads are as on-the-cusp as the playing. (Dave Holland, what were you thinking with that Holstein vest?)

Charles Lloyd/Jason Moran, *Hagar’s Song.*

The saxophonist Charles Lloyd is about to celebrate his 75th birthday; he’ll ring in that milestone with a concert on March 15 in New York at the Metropolitan Museum’s Temple of Dendur and another on the 22nd in Washington, DC at the Kennedy Center. His career as a bandleader began in the 1960s, when he

was on Atlantic Records and had quasi-rock-star status with at least one million-selling album, *Forest Flower*, another record entitled *Love-In*, and gigs at the Fillmore. He left jazz for a while, but since he began recording again on ECM, in 1989, he's attained a rare level of mastery and ease. His solos have a smart, conversational fluency, like someone thinking out loud—which could be said of any good improviser, but Lloyd's playing has an especially tangible sense of personality. His partner here, Jason Moran, 38, is arguably the preeminent jazz pianist of his generation, fluent in hip-hop rhythms as well as swing. He and Lloyd have been playing together for several years in the latter's quartet, but this is their first recording of duets. Moran is a great foil for Lloyd, sometimes spiky, sometimes enveloping, pushing here, coaxing there. For the most part, though, this is a gentle, contemplative album. If the Davis record is about musicians confronting the limits of their art form, this album is about the simpler pleasures of two men talking. Less *White Album*, more *My Dinner with Andre* (minus the angst). Here's their beautiful take on Brian Wilson's "God Only Knows."



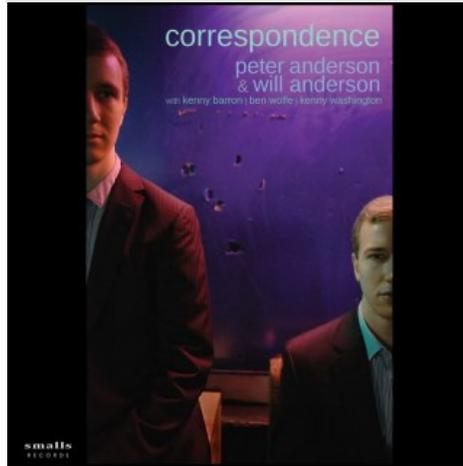
Wayne Shorter Quartet, *Without a Net*.

Shorter, who will turn 80 in August, has had a long, up-and-down career, moving between innovation and crowd-pleasing (in the 70s, Shorter was a leader of the band Weather Report). But over the last decade, he has once again begun pushing against the boundaries of jazz vocabulary; this is acoustic music, played by highly empathetic musicians, that—to my ear, anyway—has digital trickery and shape-shifting on its mind.

Peter Anderson & Will Anderson, *Correspondence*.

The Andersons are identical twins, still in their 20s, both educated at Juilliard, who play tenor and alto saxophone, respectively. Here, on original tunes as well as a handful of jazz standards, they

demonstrate gifts for writing, arranging, and blending their horns in a way that, even if they weren't brothers, might put you in mind of sibling vocal groups like the Andrews Sisters or the Beach Boys' Wilson brothers. Not a revolutionary record, but a very pleasing one.



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