

Improvijazzation Nation

Music & Opinion for the 21st Century



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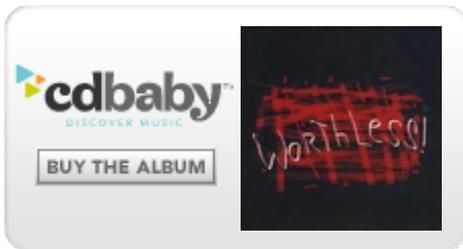
Issue 137 reviews

Our latest reviews for your reading and pleasure!!



Copernicus – WORTHLESS: There is no “steady-state” with this poet.... if you’ve never listened to him before, this is a perfect place to be introduced to this total madness... I first started reviewing Joseph’s music way back in the ’80’s... this CD is like a “culminating event” – for the universe! Tunes like “[You Are Not Your Body](#)” will give you some “inside scoop” on just how much you are worth in the scope of larger things... excellent recording on this one – but if you’re “squeamish”, or lack adventure in your blood, you’ll stay away from it! It’s the opener, “[Quantum Mechanics](#)” that captures the true power of Copernicus & his group,

though... definitely my favorite of the 8 offered up for your enlightenment (& torture – lol). I give Copernicus a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an “EQ” (energy quotient) of 4.99. Get more information at [Copernicus website for this release](#) . *Rotcod Zzaj*

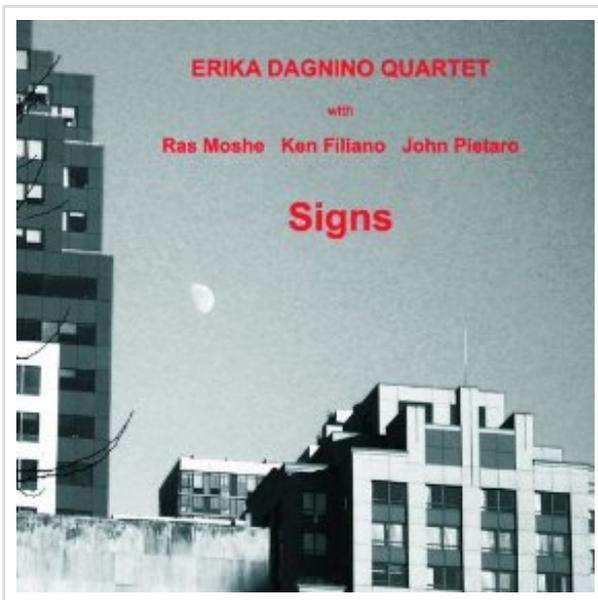
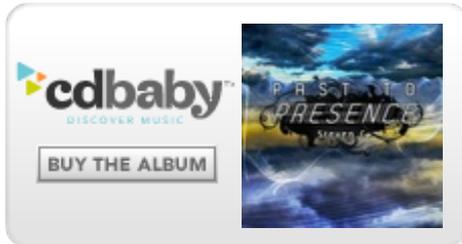


Steven C. – PAST TO PRESENCE: (Just) over 3 CD's of Steven C. Anderson's talented piano work is the perfect compliment to an early Sunday morning in Hawaii... what a beautiful world he paints with his sonics! Pieces like “[Soaring – Joy](#)” will carry you to the top of the universe (& back again). If you're looking for heavy & rambunctious, this probably won't be your cup o' tea... but if you love music that helps you escape the every day & mundane, you will love (as much as I did) “Above The Clouds” – and will find yourself queuing it up in your playlists constantly. Of the 48 tunes on the 3-CD set, my personal favorite was the bubbly “[Key Lime Pie](#)” – I think this is the best tune I've ever heard from Steven! I give this one a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, especially for listeners who demand some piano in their queue. “EQ” (energy quotient) rating is 4.97. Get more information at [Steven's website](#).
Rotcod Zzaj



[Past to Presence 3 CD set](#)

Steven C

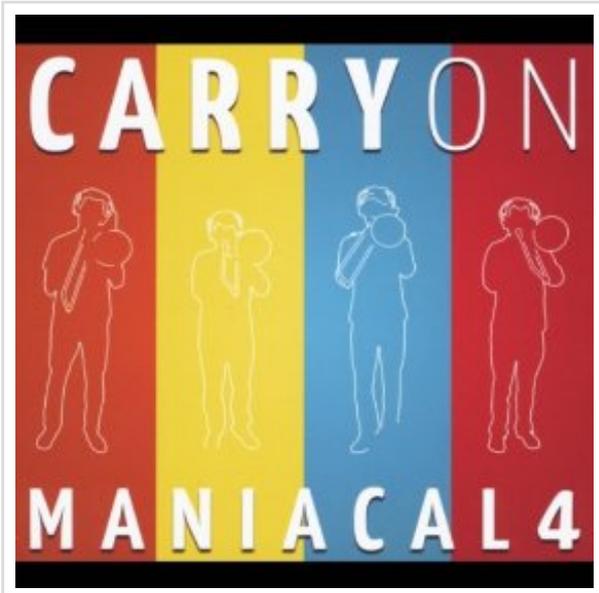


Erika Dagnino Quartet – SIGNS: Another great indie improv effort from Erika (poetry & voice); Ras Moshe (flute, soprano/tenor sax); Ken Filiano (doublebass/effects), and John Pietaro (vibraphone, glockenspiel, snare drum, tom-tom, bells, cymbals). As you listen to “Prima Improvisazione”, you’ll be as amazed as I was... this is the music dreams are made of, and this one will have you dreaming over & over again – the players are truly together on this one! It was the bass/bell/reed combo on “Intermezzo” that made it my favorite of the eight offered up... Erika’s words are in another language, but I understood (clearly) everything she was saying – & you will too. I give Erika & crew a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, especially for listeners who crave adventure in their aural experiences. “EQ” (energy quotient) is 4.98. Get more information at the [SLAM Productions website](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



[Signs](#)

Erika Dagnino Quar...

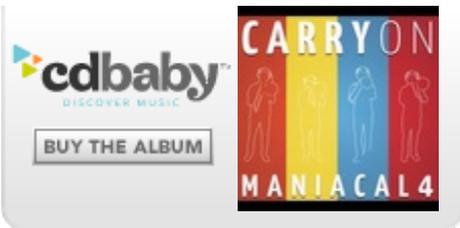


Maniacal 4 Trombone Quartet – CARRY ON: The focus is clearly on the horns, since there are 4 trombones – but there is also some (absolutely) excellent guitar work – which is only fitting, since this is really a tribute to the rocksters of yesteryear. In that regard, you'll totally dig “[Rosanna](#)” – super energy here! “[Jane](#)” packs some real punch as well, and brings back lots of mem’ries for those of us who lived in those years. From the standpoint of “energy”, though (which is what this ‘zine is really all about), it was the opener, “[Carry On Wayward Son](#)” that got my vote for favorite of the 8 tracks offered up. I give these young players a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an “EQ” (energy quotient) rating of 4.98. get more information at the [Armored Records site](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*

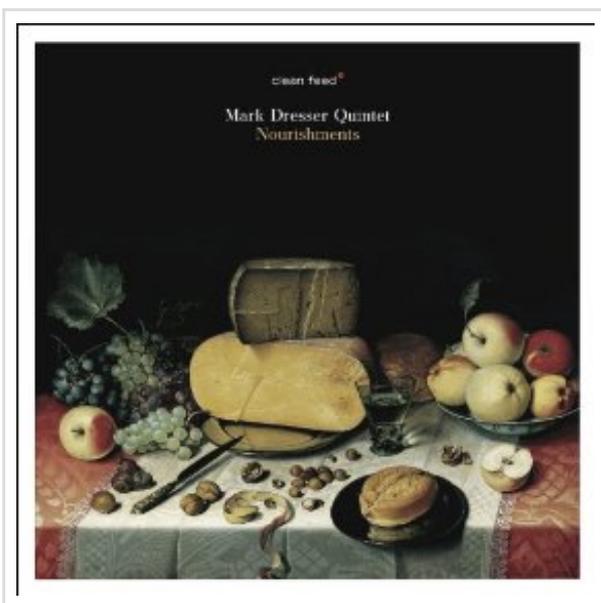


[Carry On](#)

Maniacal 4



Satoko Fujii – GEN HIMMEL: Readers who have been with me since I started this magazine will recognize Satoko's name as one who is reviewed here often... what makes this CD unique (of the over 60 she and her husband, Natsuki Tamura, have done) is this one is solo piano. One of the best pianists I have ever heard, Satoko just shines on pieces like the beautiful "In The Dusk"... since the pieces are about death and the passage of friends, the pace isn't the often frenetic jazz improv that she has become famous for... but these introspective compositions will make you stop and think – over and over again... they are truly lasting, with sonic imagery you'll never forget. My personal favorite of the dozen offered up was "I Know You Don't Know"... because it projects power in the dark zones! If you're looking for something to introduce you to Satoko's high talent – this is IT! I give Satoko a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.99. Get more information at the [SQUIDCO site for this CD](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



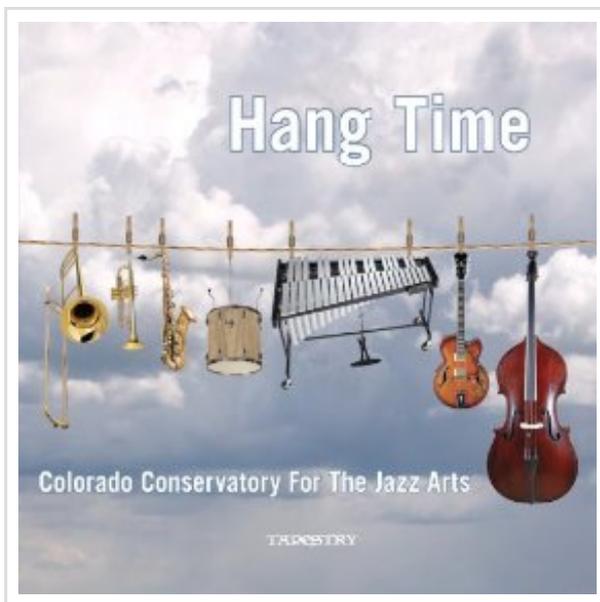
Mark Dresser Quintet – NOURISHMENTS: Tasty bits of improvised jazz nourishment indeed... Mark's skills on the bass & his prowess as a composer are on full aural display here, and every jazz fan in range will recognize this as a "keeper" right away. That will be especially

apparent on the “dig-down-deep” pieces like “[Canales Rose](#)“... if you don’t like this one, you haven’t got a whole lot of jazz spirit! The high-energy horns on the opener, “[Not Withstanding](#)” will be a hit with all, too... but the capstone (for this reviewer/listener, anyway) was Mark’s wonderful bass on “[Rasaman](#)“... delectable, to be sure! I give Mark & his crew a well-deserved MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an “EQ” (energy quotient) rating of 4.98. Get more information at [Mark’s website](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



[Nourishments](#)

Mark Dresser Quint...



Colorado Conservatory For The Jazz Arts – HANG TIME: What makes this CD so aurally attractive is the energy generated by such young talent... two ensembles mentored by Greg Gisbert and Eric Gunnison do jazz so tight you’ll think you’re listening to the old masters! Solid tunes like “[Tai Chi](#)” will make your playlists over & over – & over again! From a purely “jazz perspective”, tunes like “[Home](#)” will take you back to what jazz is “supposed to sound like”. Of the 14 tracks offered up, though, it was the marvelously disjointed (yet totally enjoyable) “[Quirkatude](#)” that got my vote for favorite – what a neat little sonic package! I give these ensembles a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an “EQ” (energy quotient) rating of 4.97. Get more information at the [CAPRI RECORDS label page](#) for this CD. *Rotcod Zzaj*



[Hang Time](#)

Colorado Conservat...



The Ali Ryerson Jazz Flute Big Band – GAME CHANGER: There will be NO doubt in your mind that Ali named this CD right when you listen to the superb opener, “Daahoud”... it’s definitely tunes like this that make the flute recognizable as one of the best instruments in jazz; believe it, or not, there are some purists who don’t believe the astounding “cool” that the flute brings to jazz (& has for the last several years). Sit them down & get them to listen to my (personal) favorite track on this 10-song keeper CD, “Con Alma“, and they are bound to drop their criticisms... that “swirl” that’s going on with this one will stay in your head infinitely – too cool! I give Ali & her crew (including famous guests like Hubert Laws & Holly Hoffman) a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with a top-level “EQ” (energy quotient) rating of 5.00 – which means this is also the “PICK” of this issue for “best flute jazz”! Get more information at the [Capri Records label page](#) for this release. *Rotcod Zzaj*



[Game Changer](#)

The Ali Ryerson Ja...



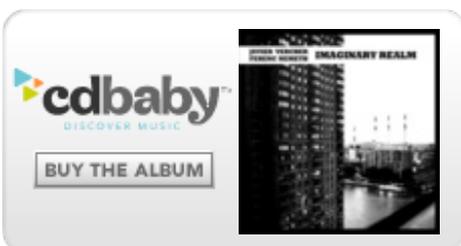


Javier Vercher and Ferenc Nemeth – IMAGINARY REALM: Javier's tenor sax and Ferenc's drums (along with a guest piano shot from David Kikoski on selected tracks) explores territory I'm before in my own musical meanderings. Their excursions together are totally focused, with no errors in the recording or in their intent... just listen to the intriguing "Poets Of The East" to get a taste of the mystery they weave for your ears! Of the eleven sonic wonderments they've painted for you, I found the energy on "Giant Henge" to be the most satisfying, and my favorite of all the tracks – a lot of that had to do with David's driving keyboards, too, I believe. I give this splendid jazz duo a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.98. Get more information about them at [Ferenc's website](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



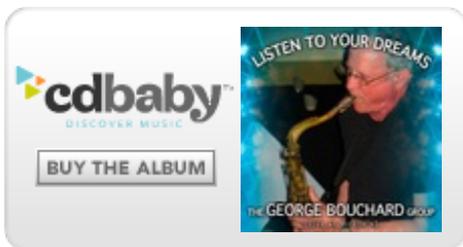
[Imaginary Realm](#)

Javier Vercher, Fe...





George Bouchard – LISTEN TO YOUR DREAMS: For some strange reason, I was surprised to read that George originally hailed from the same turf I grew up on/in/around... he was from Buffalo, NY – I was just down the road a few miles, in Erie, PA. Why was I surprised? Because, despite the “traditional” upbringing in that region, he still glommed on (in a big, BIG way) to how powerful a force jazz is (& should be) in our lives. As I listen to “I’m Your Baby”, I hear life pumpin’ through his reeds! George’s sax is full-frontal jazz... her certainly takes no prisoners on th’ down & funky “Nothin’ I Can Do”! It was the funk on the closer, “It Doesn’t Matter” that got my vote for favorite, though... some of the best reed-led jazz I’ve listened to in 2013. I give George & crew a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an “EQ” (energy quotient) rating of 4.98. Get more information at [George’s website](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



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I Know You Well Miss Clara – CHAPTER ONE: There is, like absolutely, a reason why the releases from [MOONJUNE Records](#) continue to get reviews here – & that is because they are SO far ahead of the “norm” that it’s not possible to find anything that can equal them. Another brilliant “find” from Indonesia, on which you will find stellar tunes like the 10:17 opener, “[Open The Door, See The Ground](#)”... man, the guitars (& everything else) just SOAR on this piece... rock & jazz combine to take you on a trip like you’ve never experienced before. I’m not sure why, but “[Dangerous Kitchen](#)” turned out to be my favorite of the 7 (l-o-n-g) tracks offered up for your aural pleasure – this just takes off & FLIES at about the 2:00 mark! This music easily can be recognized as the 21st Century equivalent of Mahavishnu, & gets a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, from me, with an “EQ” (energy quotient) rating of 5.00 – which means it also gets the “PICK” of this issue for “best new jazz”! Get more information at the [MOONJUNE](#) page for this release. *Rotcod Zzaj*

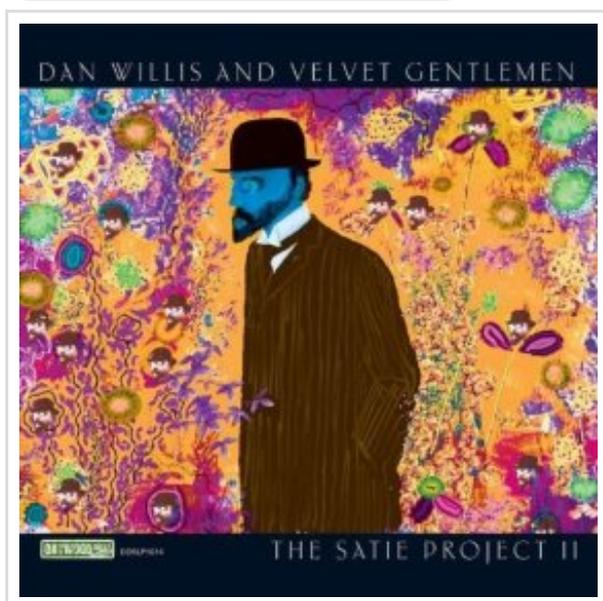
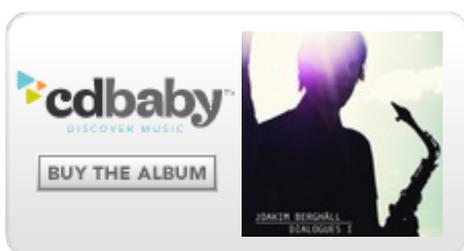


[Chapter One](#)

I Know You Well Mi...



Joakim Berghall – DIALOGUES I: A wonderfully intimate collection of duets with pianists that Joakim selected from the '50's through the '80's, this CD will stay right at the top of your playlists (I've no doubt) if you love reed/piano duets! I particularly enjoyed the straight-ahead approach on "[Cascabel](#)"... Alexi Tuomarila's keyboards are strident and lively all the way through this one. You actually get 10 "total immersion" experiences, each with different flavorings and nuances. My personal favorite was the dynamic "[Portland](#)", with Seppo Kantonen, whose piano establishes a baseline for the soaring (and often Getz-like) reeds from Joakim. I give this one a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.98. Get more information at [Joakim's website](#) (& be sure to tell him you read about his work here). *Rotcod Zzaj*



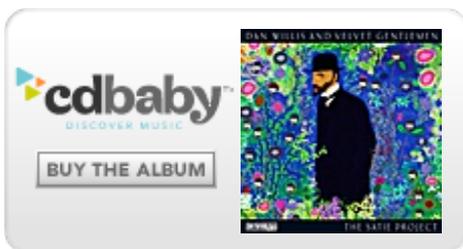
Dan Willis and Velvet Gentlemen – THE SATIE PROJECT II: You don't actually "have" to be a horn-lover to enjoy this monster excursion into "just what the horns can do" – because by the time you're finished listening, you will be! In point of fact, I haven't heard music this invigorating and innovative for more than a few years now... as you catch the "undercurrent" on the opener, "[Grossienenne #7](#)", you'll know what I'm raving about – heck, you can almost hear "John Shaft" in there somewhere! The moods change as often as the tunes do, too... I truly

dug deep on “[Pieces Froides I](#)”... some wonderful marimba as counterpoint for the horn. Turns out my favorite of the dozen tracks was an organ-driven killer called “[Gnossienne # 4](#)”... the ultimate sad & bluesy kind of tuneage we all love! I give Dan and crew a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an “EQ” (energy quotient) rating of 4.98. Get more information at [Dan’s site](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



[Satie Project](#)

Dan Willis & Velve...

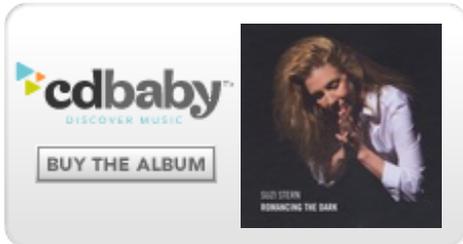


Suzi Stern – ROMANCING THE DARK: There are plenty of “just jazz singers” in today’s market, but I can tell you that Suzi’s definitely not “just” anything... listen to the opening track, “[Firefly](#)”, and you’ll hear a singer who has “been there” already... and she paints sonic beauty that makes you want to go right along with her, no matter the cost! While this outing (she’s released 7 CD’s previously) isn’t exactly jazz, the tunes are all originals – which in itself lends an air of excitement; at least for this listener. The percussion intro on “[Sounds Are Louder In The Dark](#)” was the perfect way to get you to notice what she means in the title – a truly excellent tune! It was the almost-theatrical “Tango For Tina” that got my vote for favorite of the 11 on this fine CD. I give Suzi (& crew) a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an “EQ” (energy quotient) rating of 4.98. Get more information at [Suzi’s website](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



[Romancing the Dark](#)

Suzi Stern

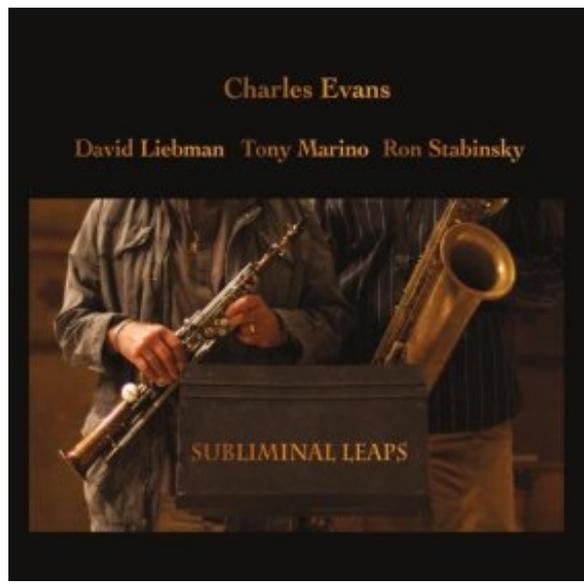


Brian Chase – DRUMS & DRONES: If you're among the listeners who believe that "drone" is not music, then move on along to the next stack of records; but, if you "get it", and understand that some of the most beautiful and involved music is the universe stems from this type of music – then you'll love this CD! There are 10 intricate pieces here that will transport you to the next sonic level and far beyond. One of my favorite pieces was "Melody Drum Drone"; all vistas are opened up to you on this one, and you will come away from the experience with a new understanding. My personal favorite of all the tracks, though, was "Cymbal Drone"... man, this stays in your head for days, weeks – maybe even months! I give Brian a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, though as noted above – this isn't for every listener; only the sonically adventurous. "EQ" (energy quotient) rating is 4.97. Get more information at the [POGUS label page for this CD](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



[Drums & Drones](#)

Brian Chase, n/a

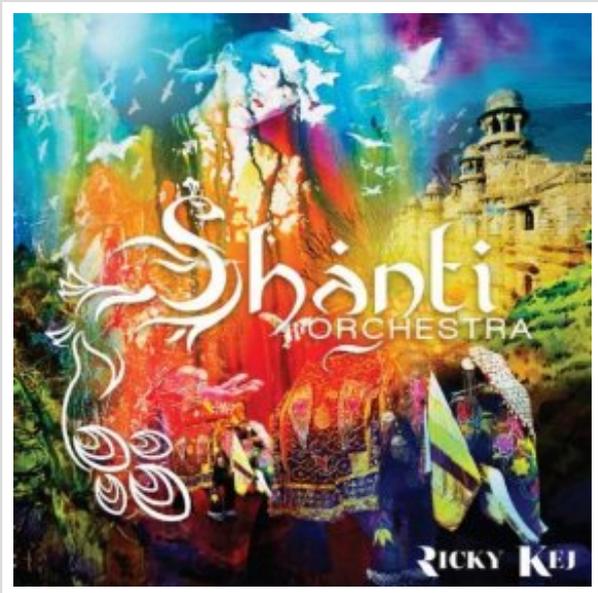


Charles Evans – SUBLIMINAL LEAPS: If you never considered bari-sax as a “real” jazz instrument – you just wait until your ears get a snoot full of Charlie’s latest (September 2013) release with David Liebman on tenor sax, Tony Marino on bass & pianist Ron Stabinsky. Especially on cuts like the wonderful 8:07 “[Dreamed Out March](#)”... where changes like you’ve never heard them before abound. I’ve reviewed a couple of Charles’ CD’s here before, and can say without equivocation – this is his best yet! All four players are right at the forefront on the totally intriguing “[Interruptions](#)” – which also turned out to be my personal favorite of the 6 tracks offered up (be sure to listen to this one with your headphones on, so you catch all the little nuances). I give Charles a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an “EQ” (energy quotient) rating of 4.99. Get more information at the [MORE IS MORE label page](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



[Subliminal Leaps](#)

Charles Evans

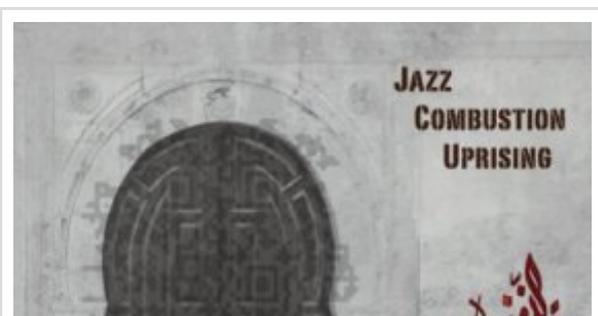


Ricky Kej – SHANTI ORCHESTRA: There are those, I'm told, who believe that electronic-based music has no place in the listening queue... well, after they listen to Ricky's excellent work on this debut indie album, they will change their minds! As I listen to "Forever", I'm highly impressed at the energy and insight conveyed – excellent emotional palette he's painting on here. He's joined by a whole host of other players (over 20, in fact) that understand their craft and display high talent throughout the dozen tunes on the CD. My personal favorite was a tune called "Intervention"... a true and shining build that will wrap you in the spell (& won't let go – you'll be hearing this for days after in your head). I give Ricky a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.98. Get more information at [Ricky's website](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



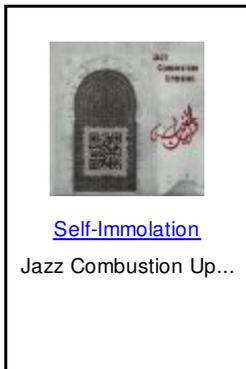
[Shanti Orchestra](#)

Ricky Kej



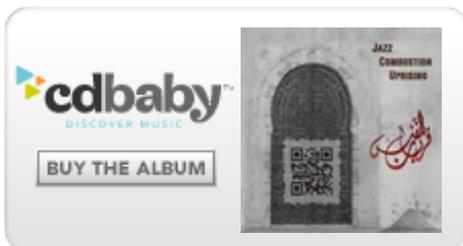


Jazz Combustion Uprising – SELF IMMOLATION: As you might gather from the CD title, this one is H-O-T! David Elaine Alt's reeds set the house on fire, no doubt! That's totally evident on the scorching opener, "[Oxtail Soup](#)"... absolutely killer jazz! David's cast of characters is far too long to itemize here, but you can check that out at the [band page](#). If you're in the mood for something with a bit more "mood" involved, you'll dig deep into "[44 Magnum](#)" (despite the odd title, this feels like a nite at the speak-ez). It was the high-energy "[Series of Adjustments](#)" that got my vote for favorite of the 11 tracks, though... great balance between the instrument and excellent recording quality. I give David & crew a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.99. Get more information on the CD at the [band page for this release](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



[Self-Immolation](#)

Jazz Combustion Up...



Jessica Jones & Connie Crothers – LIVE AT THE FREIGHT: The fact that this is a live recording from a show does nothing to detract from the magic spell this duo (Connie on piano & Jessica on tenor sax) weave for your aural appendages. They totally compliment each others' vibe on "[In A Sentimental Mood](#)"... laid-back, yet exhilarating, to be sure! I've been reviewing both of these ladies for many years now, and can tell you that this is one of the most solid recordings I've heard either of them do! There are some audience noises mixed in between the tunes, but for the most part, the focus is on the high-energy and totally expressive playing. My personal favorite of the 7 (long) tracks offered up was an improv titled "[That's What You Get](#)"... the most expressive jazz duo I've heard yet this year. Jessica & Connie get my MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.98. Get more information at the [page for this CD on Jessica's site](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



Fred Hersch & Julian Lage – FREE FLYING: Live recordings either make it, or they don't... as you listen to Fred's piano and Julian's guitar on this magnificent live duo, you'll realize that this is one of the ones that MADE it! I was especially impressed with tunes like "Down Home" – it's on pieces like this that you hear what music is really all about – having FUN with it; tasty, indeed! The beautiful "Heartland" will put you in the pensive mood you needed for the moment. It was the sonic acrobatics on "Stealthiness" that won my vote for favorite, though... only 5:16, but it won't get out of my head! An all-round great jazz CD that gets a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED from my ears, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.98. Get more information at the [Palmetto label site](#) for this release. *Rotcod Zzaj*



[Free Flying](#)

Fred Hersch and Ju...



Kanji Ohta & The Jazz Family With Jimmy Heath – OUR JAZZ FAMILY: The CD title very

aptly describes what Kanji & friends are doing here... this does indeed have a "family" feel, and his piano just sings with a clear love of jazz! I especially dug tunes like "On The Trail", which shows a dexterity across the whole spectrum of players not often found on jazz CD's today. More traditional tunes like "Tea For Two" are also sounding mighty nice, and will reside on your playlist(s) for some time to come, especially if you love high-energy piano (like I do)! My personal favorite of the 9 tunes offered up for your pleasure was the oddly titled, but fully invigorating "For Minors Only". Kanji has a style reminiscent of the late-'70's era of jazz jumpin', & I'm in love with it already. I give him & his jazz family a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.99. Get more information at [Kanji's website](#). *Rotcod Zzaj*



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