

Bill Meyer on Jazz & Improv

- 1 **James Brandon Lewis/Red Lily Quintet**
Jesup Wagon (Tao Forms)
- 2 **Natural Information Society with Evan Parker**
Descension (Out Of Our Constrictions) (Eremite)
- 3 **Chris Corsano & Bill Orcutt**
Made Out Of Sound (Palilalia)
- 4 **William Parker**
Mayan Space Station (Aum Fidelity)
- 5 **Hafez Modirzadeh**
Facets (Pi Recordings)
- 6 **Brandon Lopez Trio**
Live At Roulette (Relative Pitch)
- 7 **Sylvie Courvoisier & Mary Halvorson**
Searching For The Disappeared Hour (Pyroclastic)
- 8 **Frantz Loriot**
While Whirling (Thin Wrist)
- 9 **Keith Rowe**
Absence (Erstwhile)
- 10 **Damon Locks Black Monument Ensemble**
Now (International Anthem)



The jazz life has never been a stroll down easy street, but in the pandemic's second year, matters of financial and artistic survival predominate. Satoko Fujii, Natsuki Tamura, Ikue Mori, Tim Daisy, Vasco Trilla, Chris Corsano and Bill Orcutt accomplished spontaneous interactions via file exchange. The Corbett Vs Dempsey label commissioned the *Black Cross Solo Sessions*, a series of solitary recordings that reflected the time's isolation while throwing much-needed work towards musicians who weren't getting a lot of it. John Butcher, Alberto Braidá, Paul Dunmall, Joëlle Léandre, Damon Smith and Mike Reed are among those who issued fine new recordings albeit made at least five years ago; one supposes that if these musicians were out playing more, they might have felt less necessity to get those sounds out of storage.

Others took the urge to play out quite literally. Tony Malaby played regular concerts under a New Jersey turnpike bridge, and Dave Rempis returned to Chicago's Margate Park as soon as the weather got tolerable. Also in Chicago, Damon Locks's Black Monument Ensemble issued an album made in Experimental Sound Studio's back yard, accompanied by cicadas. And when Berlin's clubs reopened, folks outside listened through open windows while maintaining social distance.

Themes of entwined survival and creativity also imbued recordings like James Brandon Lewis's marvellous *Jesup Wagon*, inspired by Dr George Washington Carver, whose many scientific and agricultural advances targeted threats to physical, cultural and environmental survival. And Don and Moki Cherry's recentering of creativity within family and communal settings was re-evaluated in a series of albums, exhibits, publications and concerts arranged by Blank Forms and Corbett Vs Dempsey. □

Julian Cowley on Modern Composition

- 1 **John Cage**
Number Pieces (Another Timbre)
- 2 **Olivia Block**
October, 1984 (Longform Editions)
- 3 **Michael Mantler**
Coda: Orchestra Suites (ECM)
- 4 **Chris Cundy**
Mountains (Aural Terrains)
- 5 **Akropolis Reed Quintet**
Ghost Light (New Focus)
- 6 **Recap**
Count To Five (Innova)
- 7 **Linda Catlin Smith**
Ballad (Another Timbre)
- 8 **Barbara Monk Feldman**
Verses (Another Timbre)
- 9 **Catherine Lamb**
Muto Infinitas (Another Timbre)
- 10 **Alex Paxton**
Music For Bosch People (Birmingham Record Company/NMC)



In spite of all the unforeseeable difficulties of recent months, Simon Reynell has sustained both the editorial quality and the musical vitality of his Another Timbre label. Although it is grounded in his personal preferences, the unpredictable growth of its catalogue continues to provide an illuminating perspective upon contemporary composition and interpretation.

The performable musical legacy of John Cage – as opposed to the broad sweep of his ideas, or his abstracted status as a precedent and source of permission – has rarely been served so well as on this consistently beautiful realisation of his *Number Pieces*. Members of Apartment House demonstrate, once again, the importance of an interpretative approach that allows them not only to remain faithful to a score, but also to transmit aspects of their own collective sensibility. Such meshing of horizons respects the composer's vision, yet also allows the productive and transformative dimensions of performance to be experienced. Akropolis Reed Quintet, based in Detroit, achieve a comparable outcome. While readily displaying considerable technical skills, they are never content to simply render the works they play. Their passionate commitment and tightly focused energies spark and nurture life latent in works they programme.

The debut release from New Jersey's percussion quartet Recap is a revelation and a delight. Open and averse to the formulaic, they clearly find excitement in a wide range of options. *Count To Five* embraces a piece for found objects and sampled sounds, and also a fresh setting of a familiar hymn. Recap reach out through their performances to composers and to listeners and, audibly, they love doing what they do. The art of interpretation is so much more than a matter of conservation. □

Raymond Cummings on Noise, Industrial & Beyond

- 1 **TAHNZZ**
High Mija (No label)
- 2 **Kyle Flanagan**
Cornell 5/8/77 (Skin Trade)
- 3 **Dimmer**
midREM (Deathbomb Arc)
- 4 **Make Noise Myanmar**
Various (Make Noise Myanmar)
- 5 **Leila Bordreuil**
Not An Elegy (Boomkat Editions)
- 6 **Cyrocene**
Exclave (New Forces)
- 7 **Maria Chavez**
ASLEEP/AWAKE/EKAWA/PEELSA, Spring 2021 (No label)
- 8 **Josh Peterson**
Collected Voice, Text And Tape Works (Adhuman)
- 9 **Doll**
Comfort Is A Disease (Virtues)
- 10 **Clang Quartet**
Judge Thy Neighbor, Love Thyself (Cruel Symphonies)



Want a taste of how sprawling and varied international experimental music has become? Consult the *Make Noise Myanmar* charity compilation or its sequel, convened by Seah and Mykel Boyd to benefit the resistance to Myanmar's military junta government. From Francisco López's field recorded Jenga pile to Xambuca's staccato static-clang to Big City Orchestra's hazy, dulcet plonk, the underground is as infinite as it is altruistic.

The rest of the best of 2021 reflects the wild mood swings we've endured these last few years. Josh Peterson's *Collected Voice, Text And Tape Works* and Arizona based Doll's *Comfort Is A Disease* tap the darkest, most added veins of contemporary society, while Clang Quartet's righteous *Judge Thy Neighbor, Love Thyself* reacts to them. *Exclave*, the debut of New York's Cyrocene, channels rip roaring inner turmoil while Kyle Flanagan's gnarly *Cornell 5/8/77* base-jumps into an active volcano.

Brooklyn's Leila Bordreuil finds solace in *Not An Elegy*'s scraps and whispers, New Mexico's TAHNZZ confronts darkness on *High Mija*. California's Dimmer and New York City's Maria Chavez in their own ways come bearing immersive sonic healing with short-circuiting *midREM* and head-spinning *ASLEEP/AWAKE/EKAWA/PEELSA, Spring 2021*, respectively. No matter what 2022 brings, weird sounds will emerge to help us through it. □