

Good Things Come in 3s

The piano-bass-drums trio has been a major part of jazz ever since pianist Jess Stacy in 1935 became the first to record in that format, cutting two songs with bassist Israel Crosby and drummer Gene Krupa. Three of the five releases covered in this column feature that instrumentation.

Dodo Marmarosa (1925–2002) was one of the top bop pianists of the 1945–50 period before mental problems forced him into semi-retirement. While acclaimed for his playing, one does not think of Marmarosa as being a major composer; none of the songs that he wrote for his record dates ever caught on or were even published. However, pianist **Craig Davis** on *Tone Paintings* (MCG Jazz, 50:50 ★★★★★½), with the notable assistance of bassist John Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton, successfully revives 10 of Marmarosa's obscure songs while contributing his own ballad "A Ditty For Dodo." Davis, who like the older pianist is from Pittsburgh and toured with the Artie Shaw Orchestra (a ghost version in which he played some parts originally written for Marmarosa), has a complementary boppish style and displays obvious affection for the material, much of which he had to transcribe.

Ordering info: manchesterbidwell.org/mcg-jazz

Pianist **Cliff Korman** has long had an affinity toward Brazilian jazz, creating the Brazilian Jazz Ensemble at the Manhattan School of Music back in the late 1970s and producing Brazilian-based albums for the Chesky label. Despite that, one should not expect the digital-only release *Brasilified* (Tiger Turn; 69:58 ★★★★★) to be a set of bossa novas for the music is less Brazilian than it is post-bop jazz despite its sources. Joined by bassist Augusto Mattoso and drummer Rafael Barata, Korman digs into such pieces as clarinetist Paulo Moura's "Guadeloupe" (which borders on avant-garde jazz and is heard twice), a soul-jazz version of Milton Nascimento's "Viola Violar," a harmonically modernized "Triste," the group's high-powered rendition of "Speak No Evil" (one of two songs with guest altoist Paulo Levi), a few melancholy ballads and the joyful title cut. Ignore the *Brasilified* name and simply enjoy the high-quality trio explorations.

Ordering info: cliffkorman.com

Veteran pianist **Matthew Fries** displays his own harmonically rich voicings during eight of his originals on *Lost Time* (Xcappa; 55:42 ★★★★★), a 2021 recording with bassist John Hébert and drummer Keith Hall. While he does not introduce any melodies that will stick in one's mind, Fries explores a variety of moods on his modern mainstream set, including an energetic jazz waltz ("The



John Clayton (left), Craig Davis and Jeff Hamilton

Fog"), the dreamlike "Insomnia" and a surprisingly cheerful and swinging "Quarantine." He dedicates "Heroes" to Chick Corea, dedicates a heartfelt "Lost Time" to his late mother, leaves a generous amount of solo space for Hébert (who is outstanding throughout) and intuitively interacts with his sidemen in a manner reminiscent (but not derivative) of Bill Evans.

Ordering info: xcappa.com

Departing from the piano-bass-drums format, **Trio Xolo's** *In Flower In Song* (577 Records; 43:07 ★★★★★) features bassist Zachary Swanson, tenor-saxophonist Derrick Michaels and drummer Dalius Naujo performing very freely on nine of the bassist's originals. While this instrumentation immediately reminds one of Sonny Rollins, Michaels' large sound and free-flowing style is closer to that of Albert Ayler, with Swanson's assertive playing and Naujo's constant musical comments providing plenty of supportive fire. There are quieter moments and a fair amount of mood variation but the most memorable moments are when the three musicians cut loose without restraint and rely entirely on their spontaneous instincts.

Ordering info: 577records.com

Reverso is a different type of trio. Consisting of trombonist Ryan Keberle, pianist Frank Voeste and cellist Vincent Courtois, the musicians' main goal is to blend together jazz with the impressionism of French classical composers. On *Harmonic Alchemy* (Outnote; 56:45 ★★★★★½), Reverso includes many references to the music of Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924). All three members of the group contribute compositions and the improvised sections in the music are logical outgrowths of the themes. The first few selections are mostly pretty somber, but things get more interesting with a pair of heated performances ("Into Me You See" and "Léon") and the haunting melodies of "Florice" and "Courbes." **DB**

Ordering info: outhere-music.com



DAVE DOUGLAS QUINTET
SONGS OF ASCENT
Book 1 – Degrees

Dave Douglas Quintet *Songs Of Ascent* Books 1 & 2 GREENLEAF

★★★★½

Prolific trumpeter Dave Douglas reconvenes one of his key quintets to present his Psalms-inspired *Songs Of Ascent* in two volumes of eight tracks apiece. The first, *Degrees*, is available through conventional channels. The second, *Steps*, is only available to listeners with a Greenleaf Music membership that gives them access to otherwise unavailable material.

All tracks were recorded remotely. All sound organic and natural.

While each "book" stands on its own, the second ends better: "Lift Up Your Hands," splashy and stately, rounds out the whole project more richly than "Mouths Of Joy" capped the first.

The music is largely captivating, alternating tunes that begin with unison lines featuring Douglas and multi-reedist Jon Irabagon and more group-oriented, leisurely efforts.

"Never Let Me Go," the first track, reaffirms the virtuosity and muscularity of a band Douglas first led 10 years ago. The other memorable cuts on the first disc are "Lift Up My Eyes," "Enthroned" and "Mouths Full Of Joy."

"Lift Up" starts with ascending scales and showcases Irabagon, a saxman of penetrating conception. Sparked by Douglas' dry trumpet, it toggles between abstraction and lyricism. In the elegiac "Enthroned," Douglas and Irabagon turn in fine solos, but pianist Matt Mitchell's is the most dramatic. "Mouths Full Of Joy" features Douglas at his most assertive.

The one dud on *Steps* is "Let Your Ears Be Attentive." It's prickly and showy.

—Carlo Wolff

Songs Of Ascent Book 1—Degrees: Never Let Me Go; Deceitful Tongues; Lift Up My Eyes; Peace Within Your Walls; Enthroned; A Fowler's Snare; Scepter; Mouth Full Of Joy. (44:06)

Songs Of Ascent Book 2—Steps: Quiver; Olive Shoots; Grass On The Roof; Let Your Ears Be Attentive; A Weaned Child; Make A Horn Grow; Dwelling Of Brothers; Lift Up Your Hands. (45:20)

Personnel: Dave Douglas, trumpet; Jon Irabagon, tenor and soprano saxophone, clarinet; Matt Mitchell, piano; Linda May Han Oh, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com