



JoVia Armstrong
Inception
 BLACK EARTH
 ★★★★★

JoVia Armstrong lives a life dedicated to what's next. And her groove- and effects-forward *Inception*, the sophomore record of her group Eunoia Society, is another adamant expression of her tireless musical innovation.

The Detroit native spent the early part of her career serving as a percussionist, background vocalist and tour manager for JC Brooks and the Uptown Sound. In 2019, she came together with electric violinist Leslie DeShazor,

Nicole Zuraitis
How Love Begins
 OUTSIDE IN
 ★★★★★

Zuraitis is a pianist, bandleader, singer/songwriter, arranger, composer and vocalist based in New York. She leads her own quartet and often fronts the Birdland Big Band. For her sixth album, she's written 10 impressive songs investigating various aspects of relationships, touching on infatuation, self-deception, apprehension and other aspects of relationships. With the help of co-producer Christian McBride, she's fashioned original arrangements that bring these feelings to life.

McBride's lively bass line opens "The Good Ways." Zuraitis adds subtle accents on a Rhodes as she gives us her impressions of a possible suitor, acknowledging the outrageous risks he takes, singing, "You're only crazy in the good ways." Her vocal is nicely balanced between excitement and resignation.

"Like Dew" is a more cynical take on the same subject. Zuraitis plays a sparse introduction, describing the preparations a woman makes for a date, only to be left standing alone on the street when the guy fails to show up. Her smoky vocals are delivered slower and slower, mirroring the disappointment her protagon-

whom Armstrong had collaborated with previously in Detroit group *Musique Noire*, and bassist Damon Warmack, to form Eunoia Society in support of Armstrong's dissertation research at the University of California-Irvine. The experimental jazz ensemble, in which Armstrong plays her signature cajon setup, devotes itself to pairing processed effects with unexpected instruments for an original sound.

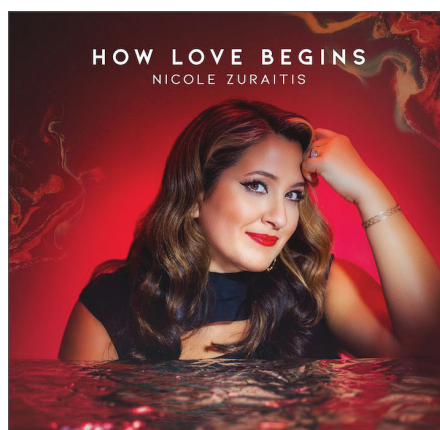
Coming together in a vortex of emotion and exploration, *Inception*, which includes the fluid stylings of guitarist Sasha Kashperko, is an otherworldly, introspective and, at times, trance-like six-song record inspired by the story of Armstrong's transition from sheltered, religious child to free-thinking adult. Throughout the adventurous album, traditional musical ideas are turned on their heads as the ensemble plays daringly with effects, including drones, reverb, and delays, as well as with forms both repetitious and free, to mirror the mood of Armstrong's transformation.

Meditative and expressive, *Inception* is a thrilling exhibition of Eunoia Society's mesmerizing sympatico and dynamic jazz mentality. —Alexa Peters

Inception: Creation; Embryo; Birth; Babies; Curiosity; Hide, Then Seek. (40:15)

Personnel: JoVia Armstrong, hybrid cajon kit; Leslie DeShazor, electric violin; Damon Warmack, bass; Sasha Kashperko, guitar.

Ordering info: joviaarmstrong.bandcamp.com

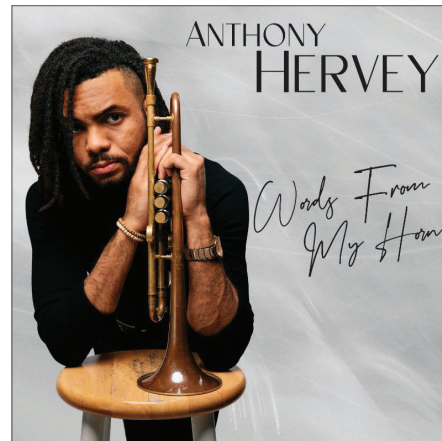


nist feels. On the positive side, "Two Fish" follows a couple as they take a deep dive into the ocean of love. It's a wide-open jazzy blues tune, with McBride's bass, Gilad Hekselman's hushed guitar tones and Zuraitis' minimal piano celebrating the joys of affection. Zuraitis sings in a comfortable tone, adding melismatic accents to deepen the sense of comfort and well-being love can bring. —j. poet

How Love Begins: The Good Ways; Travel; Reverie; Let Me Love You; Burn; Two Fish; Well Planned, Well Played; 20 Seconds; Like Dew; The Garden.

Personnel: Nicole Zuraitis, vocals, piano, Rhodes, backing vocals; Christian McBride, bass; Gilad Hekselman, guitar; Maya Kronfeld, organ; Wurlitzer, Rhodes; Dan Pugach, drums; David Cook, piano; Billy Kilson, drums; Sonica (Thana Alexa, Julia Adamy), backing vocals; Edna St. Vincent Millay, lyrics.

Ordering info: outsidemusic.com



Anthony Hervey
Words From My Horn
 OUTSIDE IN
 ★★★★★½

As a debut effort, Anthony Hervey's *Words From My Horn* is stunning. The trumpeter's first outing features an impressive array of original compositions showcasing his range and interests. Yet, it is his foray into the blues register that will make one excited about this arrival.

There is a subtle conversation here. The album begins with a tune, "Crystal Stair," a title taken from Langston Hughes' famous poem "Mother to Son." The choice to cite Hughes, a poet who effectively wrote through a prism inspired by the blues, was more than appropriate. We are then thrust immediately into the evocative "The Rust From Yesterday's Blues." There, Hervey takes this theme forward, progressing through a romp that alto saxophonist Sarah Hanahan complements. Continuing the conversation through ragtime is the tune "Du Rag," which nevertheless feels modern. With the penultimate track, "Dreams From The Crossroad," evoking the Terre Haute native's home, Hervey could also be nodding to bluesman Robert Johnson and the Yoruba deity Esu. Just as in the mythology that defines their stories, something happens to us at the crossroads of this project.

Accompanying Hervey there is a quartet featuring some of his fellow Juilliard classmates. Adding vocals on "Smoky Cloud," Hervey's duo performance of "His Eye Is On The Sparrow" with pianist Isiah Thompson precedes the uplifting blues "Better Days." Along with Thompson and Hanahan, a rhythm section featuring Miguel Russell on drums and Philip Norris shows us that blues can create joy and happiness. Not an oxymoron, Hervey's words from his horn take us higher. —Joshua Myers

Words From My Horn: Crystal Stair; The Rust from Yesterday's Blues; Neither Here, Nor There; Afro Power; Du-Rag; The Glider; But Beautiful; Smoky Cloud; His Eye Is On The Sparrow; Better Days; Dreams From The Crossroad; Words From My Horn. (64:25)

Personnel: Anthony Hervey, trumpet; Sarah Hanahan, alto saxophone; Isiah J. Thompson, piano; Sean Mason, piano (5); Philip Norris, bass; Miguel Russell, drums.

Ordering info: outsidemusic.com