

Root of Things
Matthew Shipp Trio (Relative Pitch)
 by Jeff Stockton

Pianist Matthew Shipp is frequently labeled “cerebral” and his playing is usually described using a math metaphor. Yet his musicianship with the David S. Ware Quartet was always as passionately spiritual as that of its leader and Shipp’s solo work has always been informed by the sounds of his time, including hip-hop and electronic dance beats. Consistently prolific, Shipp’s recent work as a soloist and as a leader has been a return to the basics of acoustic instruments. Basics, however, doesn’t quite cover it, because it sounds as if Shipp and his trio are putting it all together on *Root of Things*.

The disc opens with the title track, which finds Shipp and bassist Michael Bisio laying down lines that come together and apart while drummer Whit Dickey adds seasoning on cymbal and hi-hat. “Jazz It” begins with a walking bassline and proceeds as an exercise in rhythm parried back, forth and around among the players. “Code J” rounds out the first half of the program in a gentle collision of controlled melodic statements and ideas freely expressed.

The second half of *Root of Things* puts the individuals in the spotlight as each performer gets a solo moment. “Path” highlights Bisio as he mixes bowing with strumming before Shipp and Dickey come in to quicken the pace and bring the song to its conclusion. Dickey then solos to start “Pulse Code” and Shipp opens “Solid Circuit” unaccompanied. The effect of these solo segments is captivating for their exploration of tempo and touch, but also leave the listener anxious for the complete trio to reform. This is music-making at its highest level, in performances that contain elements of jazz history, certainly, but also classical accents and an overall presentation informed by a chamber sensibility. The trio manages a magic trick: they are concise and expansive, seemingly at the same time. For Shipp, it’s a career high: the years, his technique, his understanding of free jazz and swing and the avant garde and what he’s learned playing standards, composing and improvising, as a leader and as a member of a working trio. It’s all here.

For more information, visit relativepitchrecords.com. This trio is at Roulette Jun. 14th as part of Vision Festival. See Calendar.



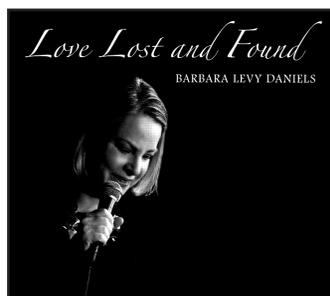
Melissa Aldana & Crash Trio
Melissa Aldana (Concord)
 by Tom Greenland

Tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana has enjoyed a rising profile following her 2013 first place showing at the Thelonious Monk Institute’s prestigious annual competition, but her third release, and first for Concord (a contract with the label being a notable perk of her win), offers compelling evidence that she’s got staying

power. The excitement stems from Aldana’s precociously mature lyric intelligence wedded to a sensitive but restrained romanticism. The pared-down format of her Crash Trio, with bassist Pablo Menares (a fellow Chilean) and Cuban drummer Francisco Mela, gives her full freedom to explore, along with the consequent responsibility to imply harmony in lieu of chording instruments.

The setlist contains two covers and tunes by each bandmember, mostly straightforward compositions with quirky twists, Mela’s catchy samba “Dear Joe” probably the most memorable of the lot. But what jumps off the CD is the graceful, unbroken logic and syntax of Aldana’s improvisations, a mix of extended phrases and shorter exclamations, glued together with parallel melodic contours or mirrored gestures or displaced counterlines, all infused with subtle ornamentation and tonal detail. Indeed, musical thoughts that begin nonchalantly often gather momentum and density as they unfold such that, just as a melodic thread seems to be winding down, a bit more skein is unraveled, revealing an unexpected twist, all in the same breath. Menares, featured to good effect on “Tirapié”, is a strong accompanist with a buoyant beat while Mela, who on “Peace, Love & Music” mimics a whole batá drum ensemble with a single drumkit, provides flexibility and finesse. Aldana’s soloing, consistently strong, is particularly so on the aforementioned tracks, the standard “You’re My Everything” and a closing soliloquy reading of “Ask Me Now”, where she gently squeezes out a high climactic note, followed by a long chromatic downwards slide, crafting a gripping narrative without resorting to melodrama.

For more information, visit concordmusicgroup.com. This project is at Dizzy’s Club Jun. 16th. See Calendar.



Love Lost and Found
Barbara Levy Daniels (Bldproductions Inc.)
 by Marcia Hillman

The Great American Songbook is rich in material about the two states of love—to have and have not. Vocalist Barbara Levy Daniels explores both in her new CD, a collection of familiar favorites with pianist and musical director John di Martino, cornetist Warren Vache, guitarist Paul Meyers, bassist Boris Kozlov and drummer Shinnosuke Takahashi as her musical accompaniment. The songs are all mostly from the ‘30s, written by some of the most creative and well-known songwriters of all times, including Johnny Burke-Jimmy Van Heusen, Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart, Hoagy Carmichael-Ned Washington and Irving Berlin, among others.

Daniels delivers straightforward renditions of each song, singing either two choruses or a chorus and a half of each, interspersed with either a piano or a cornet solo. She possesses a flair for storytelling well suited for the chosen repertoire, almost speaking the words at appropriate times. Her vocal quality swings from edginess to a softer tone depending on the lyric but the warmth is always there. She displays her most innovative phrasing on “Willow Weep For Me” and “There Will Never Be Another You”, bringing a freshness to these overdone songs.

Vache plays behind Daniels on some of the songs, punctuating her vocals and then taking a solo turn. Most notable is his inventive work on “There Will

Never Be Another You” and melting tone on “The Nearness Of You”. Worthy of mention, too, is di Martino’s lightly swinging work on “Moonglow” and inspired pianistics on a bossa treatment of “Say It Isn’t So”. Other highlights are Kozlov’s arco introduction to “For All We Know” and Takahashi’s outstanding brushwork on “It Could Happen To You” and pulsing drumming on the Latin-ized “For All We Know”.

The ingredients in this album—a talented vocalist, five most able musicians and some of the best songs to be found—all make for a most delicious treat. Enjoy!

For more information, visit barbaralevydaniels.com. Daniels is at Metropolitan Room Jun. 18th. See Calendar.

Available at CD Baby and iTunes

Anna Elizabeth Kendrick

Debut Album: *In Out of The Rain*



annaelizabethkendrick.com

Satoko Fujii in NYC

Saturday, June 14 - 7 pm
 Satoko Fujii New Trio + 1
 Vision Jazz Festival, NYC

Roulette
 509 Atlantic Avenue
 (Entrance at corner of
 3rd Avenue), Brooklyn, NY
artsforart.org

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Gato Libre
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Shiki
 Libra 215-036
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 Tony Malaby, Ellery Eskelin – ts,
 Andy Laster – bs, Herb Robertson,
 Steven Bernstein, Natsuki Tamura,
 Dave Ballou – tp, Joey Sellers,
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