

(elb); Fiona Hamilton (vn); Kirsty Johnson (acc); Rachel Lightbody (v); Joe Locke (vib); Chas Mackenzie (g); Eddi Reader (v); Tommy Smith (ts); Paul Towndrow (as). Glasgow, no recording date supplied.

NYLA Recordings 01

★★★

This is a new and refreshingly un-hyped album from drummer Cosker. I've always enjoyed his playing on other people's albums and gigs but here he shows what he can do on a project of his own. Fusion seems to have become less of a dirty word in jazz circles in recent years (personally I've never had a problem with it) and this is the best album of its type I've heard for a long while.

Although it's drummer-led, in terms of the way it sounds it's Davie Dunsmuir's electric guitar that takes the lead, and in some style. In that way amongst others it reminds me a little of mid-70s albums by David Sancious, such as *Forest Of Feelings* and *True Stories*, and that's no bad thing as those are classic albums of their type, particularly the latter.

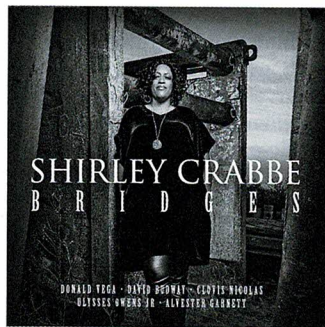
It's quite a line-up overall here, with Laurence Cottle and Tommy Smith guesting on *Dragons* alongside vocalist Rachel Lightbody who provides one of those beautiful performances that stop you in your tracks and force you to listen. Speaking of beautiful vocals, there's also Eddie Reader on *We Were Young*, and these vocal tracks fit into the album really well and don't seem like a token gesture, as they sometimes do on albums of this type. Cosker certainly doesn't hog the spotlight as leader, but he allows himself a brief opportunity to explode on *Shoogly Paw* (which to me felt like the closing track), and his contribution as lone composer, arranger, and lyricist is well worth hearing.

Dave Jones

SHIRLEY CRABBE BRIDGES

Isn't It A Lovely Day; Taking A Chance On Love; Bridges; The Bridge; I Didn't Know What Time It Was; Promise Me; The Windmills Of Your Mind; And So It Goes; Thief In The Night; Blessed Assurance (48.55)

Crabbe (v); Brandon Lee (t); Donald Vega (p, md), David Budway (p); Clovis Nicolas (b); Ulysses Owens Jr, Alvester Garnett (d); NY Strings: Chris Cardona, Sean Carney (vn); Todd Low (vla); Stephanie Cummins (clo). NYC, 2018.



MaiSong Music 2018

★★★★★

Reviewing Shirley Crabbe's 2011 debut album, *Home*, on my now defunct website, I was very impressed, commenting that its release more than made up for her late arrival on the scene. This had resulted from serious vocal problems that were eventually resolved by surgery. There has been another long wait for her second album where once again her rich vocal sound is used with subtlety and distinction.

Polished and mature, Crabbe displays very good diction thus enhancing her interpretation of the lyrics where she really shines. Her phrasing and rhythmic confidence are similarly first rate. All of her accompanists are admirable and wholly suitable, the strings being used selectively. The album concept is about connections that are longed for, made and sometimes lost. Half of the songs chosen to represent this theme are very well known but they are given distinctive performances while still retaining all their established qualities. For example, among these *I Didn't Know What Time It Was* is performed as a cha-cha-chá, a rhythmic variation that is engagingly effective. The other songs are less well known, including as they do two originals by Crabbe and Vega, *The Bridge* and *Promise Me*, and a skilfully updated old hymn, *Blessed Assurance*, but they are all good and well worth repeated hearings.

A singer of today with an abiding love for the past (her one-woman show on which she is backed by Vega celebrates Ethel Waters), Crabbe is a gifted artist who will appeal to all who admire good jazz singing. Warmly recommended.

Bruce Crowther

RONNIE CUBER

LIVE AT MONTMARTRE

Tee's Bag; Bluesette; Cherokee; Just Friends; Au Privave; Silver's Serenade; Jazz Girls; Four (53.48)

Cuber (bar); Kjeld Lauritsen (org); Krister Jonsson (elg); Andreas Svendsen (d). Jazzhus Montmartre, Copenhagen, 23, 24, 25 November 2017.

Storyville 1018458

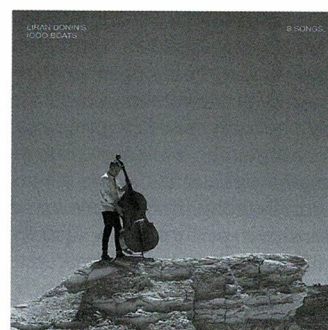
★★★

I am not sure if this trio has worked with Ronnie Cuber before but little riffs here and there indicate some diligent rehearsals. The attractive ensemble sound of baritone and guitar is seldom heard these days but this release is reminiscent of Cuber's early recordings with George Benson. In 2009 he appeared on Steve Gadd's *Live At Voce* (Challenge 73326) with a similar instrumentation which is a must for all those who love no nonsense straightahead blowing, which is exactly what we have here.

Tee's Bag (dedicated to Richard Tee) was introduced on the leader's 1993 album *The Scene Is Clean* (Milestone 9218) and it immediately establishes an infectious foot-tapping groove. That perennial jam-session favourite *Cherokee* opens with Ronnie all alone showing his collaborators exactly where he wants the tempo, which is fast. Krister Jonsson was apparently unfamiliar with Ray Noble's classic but he navigates the swift modulations of the 16-bar bridge with aplomb. With his mastery of the saxophone keywork the leader excels at fast tempos. On his 2009 quartet CD, for instance, he performs the harmonic complexities of *All The Things You Are* at a finger-busting 80 bars to the minute (SteepleChase 31680). Kjeld Lauritsen's Hammond and Leslie speaker combination creates a sanctified Jimmy Smith-like sound on *Jazz Girls* and throughout the CD he is a tower of strength in the ensembles. On his relaxed stroll through *Just Friends* Ronnie reminds us briefly of one of his favourite Sonny Rollins quotes – *Solid* – from the tenorman's 1954 date with Kenny Dorham.

Any Ronnie Cuber release is a guarantee of quality and *Live At Montmartre* is no exception.

Gordon Jack



LIRAN DONIN'S 1000 BOATS

8 SONGS

I Can See Tarifa; The Story Of Annette And Morris; Alma Sophia; Tel Aviv To Ramallah; Paws; Noam, Sea And Sand; Gal And Osh; New Beginnings; Free (57.59)

Donin (b, v); Chris Williams (as); Josh Arcoleo (ts); Maria Chiara Argiro (p); Ben Brown (d). London, no recording date given.

Cavalo 001

★★★

Geography, personal history and a range of musical influences all play their part in the songs Donin has gathered for this, his debut album. The Israeli bass player, composer and producer offers a dramatic, sweeping selection of compositions, rich in tension, tight performances and – at times – strong melodies. The album kicks off with *I Can See Tarifa*, a piece inspired by the view from Morocco across the Strait of Gibraltar to the town of Tarifa in southern Spain. It is a hot, blistering opener, full of intricate bass work from Donin and strong, soaring licks from Arcoleo on tenor sax.

Israeli, Ladino and sub-Saharan cultures all play their part in the sounds here, the constant thread being Donin's driving and distinctive playing on bass. Influenced by such diverse artists as Nick Drake, Leonard Cohen, Eric Dolphy, Shostakovich and Charlie Mingus, it is no surprise that the music sounds as eclectic as it does. All the more impressive then that such a broad sweep of influences has been shaped into an album that sounds tight and cohesive across all the tracks. Fine work from Argiro on piano and Brown on drums adds a sense of creative tension to the proceedings, with a constant, probing, searching quality being very much on display throughout the album. The bonus track, *Free*, takes us to nine songs rather than eight – but who's complaining?

John Adcock