



Four
Bill Frisell (Blue Note)
by Joel Roberts

Over the years, acclaimed 71-year-old guitarist Bill Frisell has developed a unique brand of modernist jazz mixed with elements of country, folk and rock that has really become a genre unto itself.

Frisell's latest release, his third for the Blue Note label, debuts his stellar new quartet with longtime collaborator Gregory Tardy (tenor saxophone, clarinet and bass clarinet), Gerald Clayton (piano), Johnathan Blake (drums) and, notably, no bass. The album, which had its genesis during Frisell's pandemic isolation, is a mostly serene, thoughtful rumination on loss, renewal and friendship, informed by the recent deaths of several people close to him, including trumpeter Ron Miles and heralded producer Hal Willner. It unfolds as a conversation among the four, focusing more on colors and nuance than flashy solos. The 13 tracks include both new tunes and fresh interpretations of previously recorded originals. Most are mere sketches, rather than fully realized compositions, giving the musicians plenty of freedom to explore and fill in the blanks.

As is to be expected, the songs hop constantly and seamlessly among styles and genres. Opener "Dear Old Friend (for Alan Woodward)", a folk-ish lullaby propelled by poignant clarinet, sounds almost like it was written by Aaron Copland. "Monroe" is a mostly straightforward blues while "Blues from Before" explores the blues through the lens of Thelonious Monk, whose influence is also apparent in the quirky, darting rhythms of "Holiday". "The Pioneers", with its uplifting country-spiritual feel and stirring solos from Frisell and Tardy, is a prime example of the former's trademark melding of jazz and Americana. Other tunes lean more to his experimental jazz side, especially the explosive closer, "Dog on a Roof", which moves from abstraction to a steadily grooving waltz-like finish.

This may not be a definitive Bill Frisell album. There is no overarching theme and no significant new ground is broken. But it is a successful and rewarding launch for his new group and a reminder of the leader's distinctive perspective and singular artistry.

For more information, visit bluenote.com. Frisell is at Blue Note through Dec. 4th. See Calendar.



Crisálida
Danilo Pérez (Mack Avenue)
by Russ Musto

On *Crisálida*, his most ambitious project to date, Panamanian pianist Danilo Pérez introduces his Global Messengers, culled from alumni of his Berklee College Global Jazz Institute. The band, U.S.-born vocalist Farayi Malek, Greek lauto player Vasilis Kostas, Iraqi-Jordanian violinist and vocalist Layth Sidiq, Palestinian cellist Naseem Alatrash and Israeli percussionist Tareq Rantisi, creates genre-crossing music inspired by

Pérez' vision of a borderless planet. The title (Spanish for chrysalis) metaphorically speaks to the need for a global transformation on critical issues through music. Comprised of a pair of four-movement suites, the album draws from contemporary and Latin jazz, modern classical and world musics to illustrate the inherent possibilities of unity.

The first movement of *La Muralla (Glass Walls) Suite*, "Rise From Love", opens with the gentle duo prelude of piano and guest ney flutist Farish Ishaq, which introduces the strings and a short interlude by Greece's Children Choir of the Ark of the World, followed by the rhythmic percussion of Rantisi and guest bata drummer Román Díaz and Malek's emotive vocal. The yearning "Monapatia (Pathways)" adds the vocals and Spanish spoken word of guests Erini and Patricia Zárate Pérez, respectively, to the mix. Rantisi and Díaz powerfully begin "Calling For The Dawn", blending Middle Eastern and AfroCuban cadences over which Malek vocalizes before Díaz closes with a Santeria chant. The suite culminates festively with "Muropatia", utilizing the sparkling rhythms of a folkloric Panamanian dance and including a bluesy piano solo and powerful Zárate Pérez rap chorus.

The second section, *Fronteras (Borders) Suite*, begins emotionally with "Adrift", Malek singing her prayerful lyric of "the tale of a Mexican mother seeking to reunite with her daughter after 20 years apart". "Al-Musafir Blues", with Erini rejoining the core sextet, is a heady blend of Middle Eastern and jazz modes inspired by the story of a Palestinian youth trying to reach the U.S. to find his birth mother. The penultimate "Kalesma (True Calling)" begins plaintively, then dramatically progresses with Malek's soaring vocal leading to a percussion-fueled climax. The album concludes with "Unknown Destination", the ensemble melding their individual voices reflective of their diverse cultures.

For more information, visit mackavenue.com. Pérez is at Birdland through Dec. 3rd. See Calendar.



Beauty Lies | Within
Die Hochstapler (Umlaut)
by Stuart Broomer

Die Hochstapler is a French/Italian/German collective of alto saxophonist Pierre Borel (doubling on cymbals and bird calls), trumpeter Louis Laurain (bird calls and vocals), bassist Antonio Borghini and drummer/vibraphonist Hannes Lingens. The quartet has been together since 2011 and the instrumentation may immediately suggest some likely parallels in the early quartets of Ornette Coleman and Anthony Braxton (Die Hochstapler's debut, a two-CD set called *The Braxtonette Project*, also on Umlaut, consisted of five long tracks initially juxtaposing and then merging the works of those two central influences) as well as more recent groups, e.g., John Zorn's acoustic Masada and the original form of bassist Moppa Elliott's Mostly Other People Do the Killing, sharing with the first version of the latter certain postmodern elements of parody, collage and stylistic time travel. "Die Hochstapler" is German for "The Impostors", but they're far subtler and more inventive than the name implies.

That subtlety is apparent in the simultaneous release of separate recordings so intimately entwined they are more closely connected than many multiple-CD sets, even to the extent that the title *Within* completes the sentence begun with *Beauty Lies*, compounding its meaning significantly in the process.

The two CDs were recorded at Berlin's Au Tropsi Pohl in February 2022, *Beauty Lies* during two afternoon rehearsals, *Within* from an evening performance. The temporal relations are startling. While the two segments of *Within* stretch to 57:36, *Beauty Lies* manages to present 25 tracks in a mere 42:26, with one track, "True Love" running to 10:11 while four "Loops" run between 4 and 19 seconds each.

Among the micro-episodes of *Beauty Lies*, the title of "Bells" may hint at Albert Ayler (Borel is a far more expressionist saxophonist in some other contexts, like the trio Schnell, with Borghini and drummer Christian Lillinger), but it really is about bells, Borel locking cymbals within the drum beat to create a bell-like illusion backed by rapidly boppish muted trumpet. The Coleman-esque "Squid Pro Quo" may be a scant 50 seconds, but much of that is devoted to silences between bursts of unadorned theme statement. "Rien Nul" runs just over two minutes, but is a continuous repetition of a brief industrial figure that is only occasionally and microscopically varied. That extended "True Love" is very close to an early Coleman ballad.

Those isolated bits of *Beauty Lies* are literally the storehouse of elements from which the continuous creations of *Within* are built, whether juxtaposed, sequenced or improvised on at length. "Part 1" begins with held notes against the machine rhythms of bass and drums, rapidly evolving towards playfully rhythmically driven passages, which can recall early Coleman, to compounds of written and improvised elements that are Braxton-inspired. A drum roll is extraordinarily extended in duet with the alto's circular breathing of a two-note phrase, the strangeness giving way to muted trumpet and pizzicato bass playing some bluesy bop. Borel's rejoinder is a whispered tone sustained by circular breathing occasionally punctuated by a rapid Coleman quotation (here it is "Dancing in Your Head", elsewhere it is near-"Peace") and a sudden honk.

In each long segment, the complexity expands both simultaneously and sequentially, new elements aligning both vertically and horizontally only to shift, develop or disappear, notions of the form constantly mutating. A tense pattern of rapid, loosely aligned, rising tones gives way to a sudden funeral dirge, then a solemn meditation with the horns in loose unison. There is seldom a sense of parody, but there is rare wit. A perfect facsimile of '50s cool jazz with gentle alto, walking bass and sparking vibraphone is accompanied by Laurain's weirdly scratchy effects. Bird calls? A pun on "Bird"? The alto sounds more like Lee Konitz.

Each near-half hour episode of *Within* will range from playful to dream-like. It is work that welcomes being heard as much as it resists anything like summary.

For more information, visit umlautrecords.com. This band live-streams Dec. 1st at kinggeorg.de/stream.



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