



Ben LaMar Gay *Yowzers*

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM

★★★★½

The remarkably distinctive and individualist style of Ben LaMar Gay places this Chicagoan multi-tasker at the forefront of adventurous jazz (and ritually folkloric electronica). It's his voice and phrasing, his use of worming synths and his actual songwriting that propel Gay's artistry, but his tightly contained cornet curlicues are also impressive. A stable band continues to make unstable music, with sensitive drums, deep tuba and rooty guitar aiding in this quest, as well as added bass

clarinet and three-part vocal chorus.

The title cut carries a gospel undertow, but with sneaky synth spirals in the background. "The Glorification Of Small Victories" features a free-Eastern drum-tumble, flutey electronics, small-metal showers and a vocal invocation, sounding somewhat native American, keeping phrases hollered and extended. There's even an injection of crispy cornet and restless guitar. "For Breezy" is a succinct remembrance for Jamie Branch, with some tender bass clarinet surges. The comparatively epic "I Am (Bells)" climaxes with one of Gay's most compulsive vocal out-cries, and the sympathetically lengthy "Cumulus" acts like a mini-suite for straighter jazz lovers, guitar and muted cornet conversing over uncrowded palette. But by two minutes in, it's already wisping into electro-bleeps and bassy bloop, voices joining in at three minutes, then climaxing with repeating horn, synths and clutter-drum spasms. No one is making music like this, but many would probably desire such a state of assured abstraction. —Martin Longley

Yowzers: Yowzers; The Glorification Of Small Victories; There, Inside The Morning Glory; Roller Skates; For Breezy; I Am (Bells); Promontory; John, John Henry; Damn You Cute; Cumulus; Touch; Leave Some For You.

Personnel: Ben LaMar Gay, cornet, voice, synth, bells, diddley bow, percussion, programming, manipulation; Will Faber, guitar, ngoni, bells, voice; Matthew Davis, tuba, piano, bells, voice; Tommaso Moretti, drums, percussion, voice; Rob Frye, bass clarinet, flute; Ayanna Woods, Tramaine Parker, Ugochi Nwaogwugwu, voices.

Ordering info: intlanthem.bandcamp.com

Vladimir Kostadinovic *Iris*

CRISS-CROSS

★★★★★

For his third outing as leader, the Austrian drummer Vladimir Kostadinovic put together an all-star group. Commenting on their dynamic in the album's notes, he mentions that there can be a bit of pressure when coming from the Austrian context, where players at this capacity are perhaps only around a few dates out of the month. Yet it worked here, because, as he put it: "They grab you, and you are safe." The resulting *Iris* is a delightful record. Kostadinovic is joined by vibraphonist Joe Locke, who contributes the lush tune, "Is There A Heart In The House?" midway through the program. The other band members include tenor saxophonists Chris Potter and Ben Wendel, trumpeter Alex Sipiagin, pianist Geoffrey Keezer and bassist Matt Brewer.

Of the album's seven tunes, five are originals, along with the Locke composition and Sonny Rollins's "Airegin" to close out the record. Of these five tracks, the title track, named for Kostadinovic's daughter, and "Echoes Of Eternity" stand out. With the latter, we get closer to the thesis of the record: measured solemnity. The soft life, however, is not all that it is on

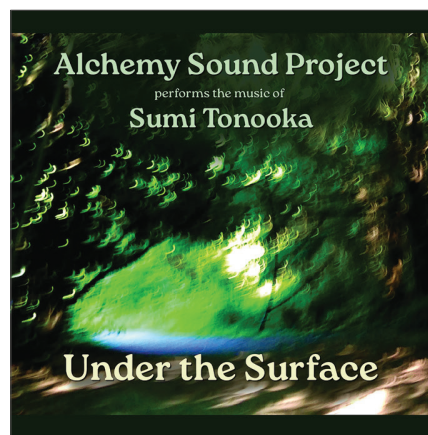


offer. Other tunes reflect the inventiveness and exploratory approaches that have made each of the band members master improvisers in their own right. Both "The World Keeps And Ending And The World Keeps Going On" and "Airegin" emerge from that dimension. But the band finds its home in its emotional territory, showing what we might learn and feel from that space. —Joshua Myers

Iris: Iris; The World Keeps Ending And The World Keeps Going On; Unborn Child; Is There A Heart In This House?; Echoes In Eternity; Collectors Of Emotions; Airegin. (53:16)

Personnel: Vladimir Kostadinovic, drums; Chris Potter, tenor saxophone (1, 2); Ben Wendel, tenor saxophone; Alex Sipiagin, trumpet; Geoffrey Keezer, piano; Joe Locke, vibraphone; Matt Brewer, bass.

Ordering info: crisscrossjazz.com



Alchemy Sound Project Performs the Music of Sumi Tonooka *Under The Surface*

ARTISTS RECORDING COLLECTIVE

★★★★★

Sumi Tonooka is a 50-year jazz veteran, her best-known recordings probably in trio and quartets with bassist Rufus Reid, or her 2012 solo record *Now*. Around that same time she invited tenor saxophonist Lindsay, trumpeter Boshnack and reeds/winds player Washington — contacts from the late, lamented Jazz Composers Orchestra Initiative — to form a mutually supportive composers-performers collective. *Under The Surface* the sextet devotes itself explicitly to Tonooka's singular music, realizing it to a "T" and requiring she be considered an artist of expansive vision.

Regarding Monk, Mary Lou Williams and Stanley Cowell as influences, Tonooka is a thoughtful, inquisitive, expressive pianist. Those qualities imbue the seven tracks of her suite, which she says concerns connections, roots and community. The music flows from start to close and is undergirded throughout by the propulsion of drummer Jonathan Blake and bassist Gregg August with the pianist-composer at their apex. The three horns spill forth colorful themes, often unusually voiced, and stretch out individually, freely. Yet all stay together.

The ensemble's pace is nuanced, sometimes languid but able to turn suddenly forceful. Melodically, there's humor like Ventoso's wah-wah 'bone on "Saveur," affecting solo statements growing upon arranged backdrops into climax as on "Interval Haiku," gentle lyricism and Tonooka's presence framing the activity. She's subtle, but the confluence of composition and improvisation is complete. —Howard Mandel

Under The Surface: Points Of Departure; Saveur; Interval Haiku; Tear Bright; Mother Tongue; For Stanley; Under The Surface. (59:05)

Personnel: Sumi Tonooka, piano; Gregg August, bass; Johnathan Blake, drums; Erica Lindsay, tenor saxophone; Samantha Boshnack, trumpet; Michael Ventoso, trombone; Salim Washington, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, flute.

Ordering info: alchemyproject.com