



Ocean Bridges
Archie Shepp, Raw Poetic, Damu the Fudgemunk
(Redefinition)
 by Kurt Gottschalk

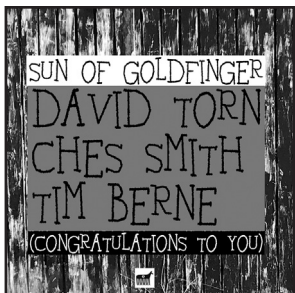
Jazz and spoken word have a long and natural relationship: bebop and Beatniks; revolutionaries of the '60s; the free verse '70s funk to hip-hop DJs sampling beats and eventually building bridges to the people who played on those old sides. Sadly, success isn't always guaranteed. Too often, one side just copped a vibe, leading to unbalanced equilibrium and short shelf-life. Witness, for example, the well-meaning and at-the-time exciting meetings on the 1994 AIDS benefit album *Stolen Moments: Red, Hot + Cool*. Pairing Lester Bowie with Digable Planets seemed like a game-changer at the time; today it just sounds like game over.

The problem has been in failing to integrate forms: breakbeats get frozen in looped precision, raps are delivered without free flow. But lately, some outfits like Heroes Are Gang Leaders (HGL) and Standing On the Corner—or Ambrose Akinmusire's work with rapper Kokayi and Nicole Mitchell's group with poet and singer Avery Young, for that matter—have made for true and exciting, hybrids of forms.

Rapper Raw Poetic sets the agenda at the outset of *Ocean Bridges*, recalling in an unscripted talk titled "Valuable Lesson" an old bandmate telling him to "shut up and listen" and his learning to leave space for "every part of the music". Poetic and DJ/producer Damu the Fudgemunk stick to that formula through their album of casual jams, leaving space for the small band that includes Poetic's uncle, the powerhouse Archie Shepp. Poetic had sent the master saxophonist more than a dozen tapes before Shepp responded to a formula within which he thought he could fit. With a quintet including HGL bassist Luke Stewart, Poetic and Fudgemunk booked studio time and brought Shepp in from France for an improvised session with no second takes.

Wurlitzer, vibraphone and processed beats dictate the easy grooves and the mix with Shepp is organic. His presence is strong throughout, not as a featured soloist but as a band member. The tracks are divided old-school style by short asides, what used to be called "skits" but here are more like musings, musical fragments and spoken asides by Poetic and Shepp. They're not quite filler but do start to feel like clutter. Take them away and there's a half dozen good cuts, the strongest being the 12+ minutes of "Aperture". *Ocean Bridges* isn't a revelation and it isn't a promise for the future, but it is a marker of a moment worth noticing.

For more information, visit redefinitionrecords.com



Congratulations to You
Sun of Goldfinger (Screwgun)
 by Tyran Grillo

Most of the material on this record was captured at the first performance in 2010 by David Torn (guitars

and electronics), Tim Berne (alto and baritone saxophones) and Ches Smith (drums and electronics). Known since then as Sun of Goldfinger, this power trio opened a sonic can of worms to be reckoned with that's only now seeing the light of day on record.

Featuring three tracks of hefty proportion, the album opens with "Bat Tears", in which alto, sampled in real time and cast into the lake of fire that is looping guitar, gives way to a skronky baritone, ending in a mix of drone and catharsis. Following this, "Coco Tangle" dances as if its pants were on fire (though, to be sure, this is honest music rendered in tough love). Sampling does the trick again this time around while arpeggiators and percussive accents from Smith fill in every pothole. That said, no roads herein stay smooth for too long and even the thickest tires of expectation will find themselves beautifully compromised by the terrain ahead.

Despite the fact that Sun of Goldfinger can break out the big guns when it feels so inclined, there's a distinctly meditative heart beating at the center of it all. One hears this especially in the final and title track, where a train crossing signal-like guitar stretches over head-nodding drums before alto kicks in the door bearing gifts of awakening. The sheer depth of coherence that ensues is a pleasure to behold in our wounded selves.

For more information, visit screwgunrecords.com



Presenting Burton Greene
Burton Greene (Columbia-Sony)
 by Pierre Crépon

Asked at a June 1969 conference the timely question of what avant garde jazz the label he was working for was engaged with, producer John Hammond mentioned ongoing work with Sunny Murray. The drummer's Columbia record was sadly never issued, but the label did get around to releasing the other product of its tentative avant garde involvement, an album led by pianist Burton Greene, portions of which were recorded 52 years ago this month.

Preceded by as little fanfare as possibly conceivable, *Presenting Burton Greene* has now become available again for the first time since its original 1969 release, through Sony's Legacy Vault, a program bringing remastered back catalog titles to digital music services such as Spotify. Legacy Vault titles skip the physical reissue stage, but a by-product of inclusion is availability on websites offering downloads in higher definition than what a CD could provide (Hiresaudio, Qobuz, HDTracks).

The quartet featured here was a working unit formed in 1966, with saxophonist Byard Lancaster, bassist Steve Tintweiss and drummer Shelly Rusten. All six pieces are Greene originals. They range from the opening tonal "Ballad In B minor" to thematic material framing simultaneous free soloing to the longer closing piece "Voice Of The Silences", whose use of space brings to mind contemporary classical devices.

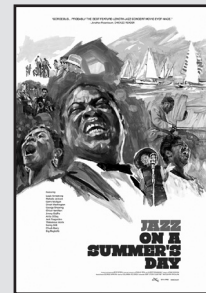
The album is sometimes noted for being an early instance of Moog synthesizer use in jazz, a point strongly emphasized by the large picture of a Moog-operating Greene on the back cover. A buyer lured solely by this novelty selling point (the label's idea) would have been disappointed, as Moog overdubs are in fact heard only on "Slurp!" and are given a secondary

position in the detailed mix.

The showcase aspect of the album's sequencing makes sense in light of the highly uncommon opportunity that a Columbia contract represented for players stamped with the "avant garde" label. The album is also an instance of more expansive production being applied to the style (in the LP liner notes, Greene takes a dig at the production of his previous efforts, on ESP-Disk'). Of course, the record went nowhere, but its composite nature and production retrospectively make it sound quite contemporary, an interesting reflection of how margins move inside genres over time.

For more information, visit sony.com

ON SCREEN



Jazz on a Summer's Day
A Film by Bert Stern
 by Kevin Canfield

The opening minutes of *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, Bert Stern's stellar 1959 documentary about the previous year's Newport Jazz Festival, move at the kind of leisurely pace often associated with an afternoon in the seaside sun. As Thelonious Monk plays, early arriving audience members nod along to the bendy notes and slouch against the backs of folding wooden chairs. Stern intersperses this and other initial scenes with shots of sailboats zipping across the Atlantic. Nobody, it seems, is in much of a hurry.

The film, now in a superb restored version, grows even more compelling after the sun goes down. Nighttime sets by, among others, Gerry Mulligan, Dinah Washington and Chuck Berry, are all compelling, but three other performers emerge as the stars of the exhilarating second half. Charismatic Big Maybelle, attired in a tiara and white gloves, sings a blistering rendition of "I Ain't Mad at You"; ecstatic concertgoers respond by dancing, solo and in couples (because of technical challenges, some of the audience scenes were shot off-site and edited in alongside the Newport footage). Later, Louis Armstrong, after some jocular comments about his busy international touring schedule, gallops through a trio of crowd-pleasers. In a film that limits some performers to a minute and change, he gets more than ten. Finally, Mahalia Jackson closes the show with three timeless spirituals. Her riveting performance of "The Lord's Prayer" gives the film the conclusion it deserves.

A portrait of a moment in time, the film—for which producer George Avakian also deserves immense credit—is mercifully free of the talking heads that clog so many contemporary documentaries. Aside from the musicians and an unobtrusive emcee, just about the only voice we hear comes from a local radio show, whose host offers a bit of boosterism about smooth sounds and great weather. Stern often films the musicians in profile, but his best shots come from a camera set up at the foot of the stage. This is an inherently reverent vantage point. These shots typically last for just a few seconds, but they'll linger in the viewer's mind for much longer.

For more information, visit kinorep.com/film/jazz-on-a-summerson-a-summer-day. Livestream screenings of the film are available at filmforum.org/film/bert-sterns-jazz-on-a-summerson-a-summer-day.