

Bluesology
George Cables (SteepleChase)
by Scott Yanow

Pianist George Cables first began recording regularly as a leader in 1979, following stints with Dexter Gordon, Art Blakey, Max Roach, Freddie Hubbard, Art Pepper and Sonny Rollins. Though his consistent excellence has arguably been somewhat taken for granted by the jazz public, he has always played extremely well in his own voice, performing forward-looking hard bop. And after all of these years, there are still no unworthy George Cables recordings.

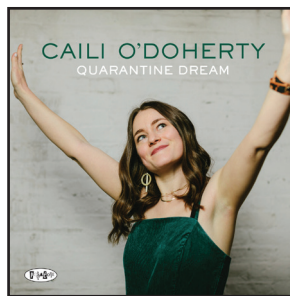
The LP reissue of *Bluesology*, recorded in Sep. 1997, is from a particularly busy time in the pianist's career. It is the eighth of nine SteepleChase albums that Cables led during the '90s; there were also three other recordings for other labels. He had previously utilized Jay Anderson (bass) on three of his SteepleChase albums, while this was the only time that he has utilized Billy Drummond (drums).

The results are as rewarding as one would expect. The LP (which has seven of the ten selections that were issued on CD) features Cables and his trio performing a song apiece by Dave Brubeck ("In Your Own Sweet Way"), Dizzy Gillespie, Randy Weston

and Milt Jackson, plus two standards and the pianist's "Voodoo Lady". To name a few highlights, Cables' version of the Swing-era ballad "Easy Living" begins quite tenderly, evolves into medium-tempo swing and closes back in its opening mood. "There Is No Greater Love" is a solid swinger that gets more heated as it progresses, giving the illusion that the tempo is speeding up even though it actually stays the same. "Voodoo Lady" is a change of pace—a joyful and rhythmic homage to Africa that could almost be mistaken for a celebratory tune by Abdullah Ibrahim.

With Anderson and Drummond contributing stimulating and sympathetic support and occasional concise solos, *Bluesology* features George Cables once again in top form.

For more info visit statesidemusic.com. *Cables* is at *Smoke through Apr. 2* and at *Ornithology Jazz Club Apr. 27* with *Hillai Govreen*. See Calendar.



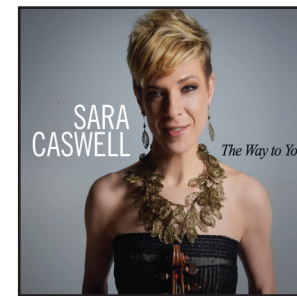
Quarantine Dream
Caili O'Doherty (Posi-Tone)
by Elliott Simon

NYC still attracts young, gifted jazz musicians who hope to gain valuable experience in its numerous clubs and venues. During the pandemic this fertile milieu was shut down just beyond a year. Pianist Caili O'Doherty's *Quarantine Dream* (recorded in September 2021) is a testament to the jazz community's resilience and its ability to adapt to challenging circumstances. Originally from Oregon, the pianist possesses an elegant touch that is strikingly complemented by saxophonist and fellow Oregonian Nicole Glover. The result is an exceptionally well-crafted album.

Bassist Tamir Shmerling and drummer Cory Cox are the hot glue holding this session together as on the album opener "Blues for Big Scotia", a playful reworking of the Oscar Peterson tune. Once the two enter, the quartet's interconnectedness is immediately apparent. The wistful title cut is a pensive, elegantly structured composition that demonstrates O'Doherty's melodic strength, while "Reach Within" showcases the synergy between Glover's spiritual playing and O'Doherty's lovely lines. On "WTF", the rhythm section's energy and depth enhance O'Doherty and Glover's performances as Shmerling adds a rich texture to the ensemble sound and Cox contributes an infectious groove.

O'Doherty's styling shines on "Al" and "Mr. O", each graceful expressions of profound emotion. Two other standards, Duke Pearson's "You Know I Care" and Charles Tolliver's "Runaway", are pleasant enough exploratory exercises, but O'Doherty's own compositions, including "The Last Trip to the Moon" and "Salt and Vinegar", drive the players forward with even greater intensity. Shmerling's arco work and Glover's sax combine gorgeously on the former, and the piano/sax interplay on the latter is especially noteworthy. "Truth" is a foreboding closer that delicately explores both uncertainty and resoluteness. *Quarantine Dream* is a cohesive and engaging musical statement—a standout offering in this year's jazz scene.

For more info visit posi-tone.com. O'Doherty is at *St. Peter's Church Apr. 9*. See Calendar.



The Way to You
Sara Caswell (Anzic)
by Thomas Conrad

Sara Caswell is at the center of the recent violin renaissance in jazz. She is not really on every new jazz album that uses her instrument, but sometimes it feels that way. When people from Fred Hersch to Henry Threadgill to Bruce Springsteen need a violinist, they call Sara Caswell. But despite her stature, *The Way to You* is her first record under her own name in over 17 years.

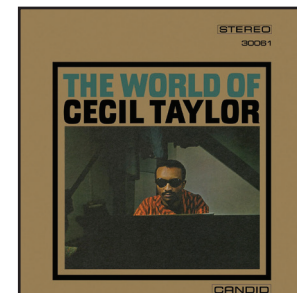
It could be called a string album. In the front line with Caswell is Jesse Lewis, a guitarist who shares her devotion to the lush, lingering lyricism only possible with stringed instruments. Ike Sturm and Jared Schonig are the bassist and drummer, and vibraphonist Chris Dingman guests on four numbers. Caswell says the five have played together "countless times in various...circumstances", and it sounds like it.

The opening track is the yearning yet piercing "South Shore", composed by trumpeter Nadje Noordhuis. The beauty of Caswell's sound will come as a revelation to many listeners, because most jazz fans, even during a violin renaissance, tend to overlook the instrument. It is a sound that speaks of the secrets of the human heart. In Caswell's hands the violin is a jazz instrument: her phrasing, for all its sweetness, also has bite.

Two of the most memorable pieces are Michel Legrand's "On My Way to You" and "O Que Tinha de Ser" by Antonio Carlos Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes. Barbra Streisand and Johnny Mathis sang the former. Caswell's version, on which her improvisation covers a three-octave range, reaches a purity of emotional truth. She ends the song in the quietest of keening cries. The latter, a relatively obscure Jobim work, has one of his most haunting melodies. And haunting melody is Caswell's specialty. But she and her band can also let their hair down and get funky too, as on "Last Call".

It is early in the year, but *The Way to You* is on this writer's working list of top jazz albums for 2023.

For more info visit anzicrecords.com. *Caswell* is at *Owl Music Parlor Apr. 6*. See Calendar.



The World of Cecil Taylor
Cecil Taylor (Candid)
by Pierre Crépon

Taped in October 1960 and already Cecil Taylor's fifth-and-a-half album (one being a split), *The World of Cecil Taylor* was among the pianist's last recordings before he made the final leap. It's just before all the elements of his later music were finally in place, but what was there was already mighty interesting.

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Those were the last days of Taylor's collaboration with bassist Buell Neidlinger and drummer Denis Charles, which began in 1956. In late 1960, the trio played Mondays—the Mingus band's day off—at Greenwich Village's The Jazz Showplace, attracting only "a few beatniks", a report once noted. A then-unknown Archie Shepp joined Taylor at the time of this recording, seemingly not on a full-time basis. However, he played tenor with the group during its three-week stint in the play *The Connection* shortly thereafter.

The music differs from Taylor's later work in several ways: the pieces are relatively short, the material includes "This Nearly Was Mine" and "Lazy Afternoon" in addition to three originals and, importantly, the music swings in a traditional sense. Often pretty hard. A lot is happening, but shorter forms lead to greater variety and ultimately great accessibility. When Taylor plays the swirling torrents of notes he was known for, he does so with jaw-dropping precision, articulating every nuance in a way that can make you shake your head in wonderment.

Shepp plays on only two numbers. The outtakes in a 1989 Mosaic boxed set showed that close to 30 takes of "Air" were necessary for the young saxophonist to play something that could be released. No one is born an avant garde master, but Taylor had the foresight to see Shepp's potential. The music is good enough for the full Mosaic set to remain the definitive version (check out Sunny Murray's contributions too), but this new remastering offers slightly superior sound, most noticeably for Neidlinger's bass. This album was part of the six-title batch that launched the Candid label in January 1961. Three of those LPs have become classics: Max Roach's *We Insist! Freedom Now*

Suite, Mingus' Presents Charles Mingus and Taylor's album. This is essential music, representing a unique waystation in the pianist's continued development, offering an excellent entry point into his discography as we commemorate this month being the five-year deathaversary of the late, great pianist.

For more info visit candidrecords.com.



Both Sides of Joni
Janiece Jaffe/Monika Herzig (ACME)
by Zachary Weg

Joni Mitchell is no stranger to jazz, having lounged with the big cats in the '70s—even making an album called *Mingus* by decade's end, recorded the same year its namesake passed away. It featured the likes of Herbie Hancock, Peter Erskine, Jaco Pastorius, Don Alias and the recently departed Wayne Shorter. Monika Herzig and Janiece Jaffe's new album, *Both Sides of Joni*, consequently serves as a fitting return of favors for the iconic singer/songwriter.

Stemming from singer Jaffe's renewed enthusiasm for Mitchell a few years back, and recorded during lockdown, this hour-long record is a passion project with reach. Alongside Herzig (piano) and a tight

band of Jeremy Allen (bass), Cassius Goens (drums) and Greg Ward (saxophone), Jaffe (who passed away unexpectedly last November) finds the jazz in the folk, the folk in the jazz, and offers a warm parting gift.

After opener "Help Me" sets the light tone with Herzig's plonks, Jaffe begins "Both Sides Now" with joyful aplomb. "I really don't know clouds at all," she sings in her breathy timbre, and even on an overcast day, she finds sunnier shades. An intimate rendition of the Mitchell tune, it would have played well at such nooks as the now-closed Upper West Side haunt Cleopatra's Needle, yet sounds equally cozy on record. All of *Both Sides of Joni* has this inviting quality. As its title hints, the record offers a peek into Mitchell's duality: her folk origins and her jazz leanings, her warmth and her wrath, her smile and her snarl. On "Don't Interrupt the Sorrow", Jaffe sings, "Since I was seventeen / I've had no one over me," and Mitchell's ferocity, her now famous refusal to take any nonsense, shines through.

A theatrical record that could almost be the songbook to a Broadway musical about Mitchell, it shows the whole Mitchell, conviction mingled with tenderness. As Jaffe sings on "My Old Man" (originally from Mitchell's *Blue*), there's the Mitchell who praises the titular character for "keeping away my blues", as well as the Mitchell who obliterates "darkness" on "The Hissing of Summer Lawns". But the record ends with Mitchell as a child, going "around and around" on "The Circle Game", as Jaffe restores her innocence and honors her artistry.

For more info visit acmerecords.com. This project with vocalist Alexis Cole is at Chelsea Table + Stage Apr. 26. See Calendar.

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