



The Ed Palermo Big Band
The Great Un-American Songbook, Volumes I & II
 CUNEIFORM RUNE 435/436

★★★★★

Ed Palermo has an unusual neurological condition: the variegated rock and jazz music of Frank Zappa swirls every which way in his head. Since the 1990s, this northern New Jersey-based saxophonist and his 16 co-conspirators have made five more-or-less excellent tribute albums to the late eccentric genius.

Now, Palermo switches things up and accommodates 1960s and '70s British rock of lasting fame or distant memory.

For *Un-American Songbook*, self-proclaimed “Lord Edward” commits himself to some preposterous fun, placing British-accented rock-star quips in a few sections of the two-album set.

But this ace bandleader-arranger is dead serious about his song-renovations, striving for exceptional music that contains levels of technical resourcefulness and emotional exposition associated with premium jazz.

Palermo bloody well nails it. Of all the Beatles songs recorded by big bands over the years, his treatments of “Eleanor Rigby,” “I Wanna Be Your Man” and three more Liverpoolian favorites are found near the front of the pack.

Soloist Katie Jacoby’s electric violin hits sweet spots on three of them, and the reed, brass and rhythm sections are marvelously crisp and alert throughout. Secret weapons Bruce McDaniel and Ringo Starr’s cousin Mick Starkey are impressive singers; the former also shines as a rock guitarist.

Palermo’s modern alchemists spin everything they touch into gold: King Crimson’s “Larks’ Tongues” (violin rules!) and “Schizoid Man,” the Rolling Stones’ “We

Love You,” Cream’s “As You Said,” the Crazy World of Arthur Brown’s “Fire” (ex-Zappa singer Napoleon Brock Murphy as Lucifer) and choice picks from the archives of the Jeff Beck Group, the Nice, the Move, Blodwyn Pig (Mick Abraham’s superb jazz-rock band) and, among more, Traffic.

For one legitimate reason or another, Palermo even sizes up Miles Davis’ “Nardis” (trumpeter John Bailey takes honors as soloist) and songs by more contemporary U.K. band Radiohead and American ringer Green Day.

—Frank-John Hadley

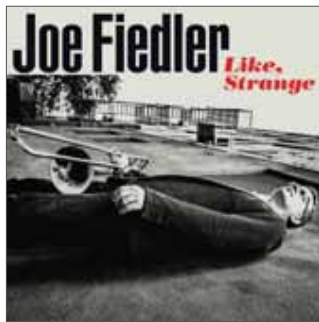
The Great Un-American Songbook: Volume One: Good Morning, Good Morning; Open Up Said The World At The Door; We Love You; Eleanor Rigby; Definitely Maybe; As You Said; Larks’ Tongues In Aspic, Part Two; 21st Century Schizoid Man; Send Your Son To Die; Edward, The Mad Shirt Grinder. (58:54) Volume Two: America/American Idiot; Beggar’s Farm; Bitches Crystal; The Wreck Of The Hesperus; Diamond Dust; The Low Spark Of High-Heeled Boys; Fire; The Tourist; Don’t Bother Me; Nardis; Don’t Bother Me (Reprise); I Wanna Be Your Man; Good Night. (54:55)

Personnel: Ed Palermo, alto saxophone, guitar; Clifford Lyons, alto saxophone, clarinet; Ben Kono, tenor saxophone, flute, oboe; Barbara Cifelli, baritone saxophone, E-flat mutant clarinet; Bill Straub, tenor saxophone, flute, clarinet; Phil Chester, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute, piccolo; Ronnie Buttacavoli, John Bailey, Steve Jankowski, trumpet; Michael Boschen, Charley Gordon, trombone; Matt Ingman, bass trombone; Katie Jacoby, electric violin; Bruce McDaniel, guitar, vocals (1, 3, 9, 12, 14, 16, 18, 21); Ted Kooshian, electric keyboards; Bob Quaranta, piano; Paul Adamy, electric bass; Ray Marchica, drums; Napoleon Murphy Brock, vocals (17); Mick Starkey, vocals (22–23).

Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com

Joe Fiedler
Like, Strange
 MULTIPHONICS MUSIC
 ★★★★★

Among trombonist Joe Fiedler’s many talents is his uncanny ability to blur the line between avant-garde and mainstream jazz. It’s a maneuver he’s perfected over the years as the leader of his adventurous trio with bassist Rob Jost and drummer Michael Sarin. With his latest project, Fiedler expands on that aesthetic, augmenting the trio with the addition of saxophonist Jeff Lederer and guitarist Pete McCann.



Though largely based on traditional chord progressions and familiar meters, Fiedler’s compositions exhibit a Mingus-like playfulness, with enough quirks and eccentricities to keep listeners guessing. “Go Get It,” the bracing opener, begins as a jazz waltz, but is continually interrupted by a driving half-time funk. A similar equivocality pervades “Quasi...,” which wobbles delightfully between blues, boogie and skronk. But the most compelling tune on the disc is the title track, an oddly invigorating mix of psychedelic funk, sultry r&b and percolating swing.

About that title: We have Fiedler’s daughter Cleo to thank. Asked to describe her father’s music, she delivered, as only a teenager can, the perfect critical assessment: “Like, strange.” —Brian Zimmerman

Like, Strange: Go Get It; Maple Avenue Tango; A Ladybug In My Notebook; Like, Strage; E.T.; Guiro Nuevo; Tuna Fish Cans; Quasi...; Yinz. (56:00)

Personnel: Joe Fiedler, trombone; Rob Jost, bass; Michael Sarin, drums; Jeff Lederer, saxophones; Pete McCann, guitar.

Ordering info: joefiedler.com

Valerie June
The Order Of Time
 CONCORD B01MF9RD6H
 ★★★★★

Tennessee’s Valerie June has been helping to define modern Americana since 2006, with the release of her debut album. After 2013’s *Pushin’ Against A Stone* garnered critical and commercial acclaim, the anticipation for a follow-up mounted.



June’s new release is *The Order Of Time*, a 12-song effort that finds the singer maturing within her niche as blues-meets-Appalachian-folk star. The songwriter’s voice shines bright here, as the instrumentation around her is stripped down slightly to make more room for lyrics and mood. The album-opening “Long Lonely Road” sets the pace for the easygoing listen. Unlike its Dan Auerbach-produced predecessor, June doesn’t go for anything in the blues-rock category here, and it works to her benefit. Instead of blending folkier tracks with rockier cuts, June is focused on her vocals, and the instrumentation seems to be built around her voice, instead of the other way around. Songs like “Love You Once Made”—which features vocals from Norah Jones—and “With You” are among her most intimate moments as a songwriter. June, now 35 years old, has made a comfortable home at the top of her field. —Chris Tart

The Order Of Time: Long Lonely Road; Love You Once Made; Shakedown; If And; Man Done Wrong; The Front Door; Astral Plane; Just In Time; With You; Slip Slide On By; Two Hearts; Got Soul. (43:28)

Personnel: Valerie June, vocals, guitar; Norah Jones, Emerson Hockett, Jason Hockett, Patrick Hockett, backing vocals; Steven Bernstein, trumpet; Douglas Wieselmann, Colin Stetson, Peter Apfelbaum, saxophones; Marika Hughes, cello; Arthur Kell, Matt Marinelli, Richard Swift, bass; Andy MacLeod, Dan Lead, Pete Remm, guitars; Mazz Swift, Dan Rieser, drums.

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com