

and “What’s New.” It all makes a convincing argument for Meurkens’ status as jazz-harmonica royalty.

**PHILIP BOOTH**

## ARTURO O’FARRILL SEXTET

**BOSS LEVEL** (Zoho)



A free-flowing sense of adventure permeates this album, recorded a few days after the sextet concluded a stint at Birdland. It’s obvious that the musi-

cians—including pianist Arturo O’Farrill and his sons Adam (trumpet) and Zack (drums), along with tenor saxophonist Livio Almeida, guitarist Travis Reuter and bassist Shawn Conley—were loose, primed and ready when they entered the studio.

The scope here is deep and wide, but the overriding musical theme is unity of opposites. Arturo O’Farrill’s original music here works to rectify apparently contradictory forces—genres, rhythmic and melodic conceits, degrees of freedom, pleasures both spiritual and sensual—by

letting these disparate elements have at one another and converge into unexpected wholes. In both ensemble passages and solos, various components and ideas juxtapose, congeal, splay apart and then reform; patterns and structures evolve and dissolve in turn, never allowing any one to establish full dominance. It’s truth-seeking as dance rather than as ideology.

Almeida’s tenor statements are muscular and resolute, their brawny tone and aggressive rhythmic attack bespeaking both gritty resolve and unshackled enthusiasm. Adam O’Farrill probes, somewhat more gently but no less resolutely, crisp and articulate, sure-pitched and full-toned, leavening hard-bop intensity with luxuriant languor. Reuter is spikier, more fusion-oriented with his molten-lava tone, quick-fingered single-note explosions and declamatory chording. Out in front, Arturo’s piano dances lightly yet with purpose, sometimes (as on the impressionistic “The Moon Follows Us Wherever We Go”) invoking shards of light illuminating a vast space, other times layering contrapuntal rhythms and melodic lines—again, forging coherence from open-ended possibility.

**DAVID WHITEIS**



## LARRY YOUNG

**IN PARIS: THE ORTF RECORDINGS** (Resonance)



These 1960s European sessions capture organist Larry Young in a fruitful mid-period of his tragically short career: beyond the overt Jimmy Smith influences of his early material for Prestige, but not yet in the cosmic avant-jazz-rock orbit he would later deploy with the Tony Williams Lifetime, jamming with Jimi Hendrix or on criminally underrated discs like his prog-fusion gem *Lawrence of Newark*.

It was the era of Coltrane, and Young was appropriately enamored of Trane’s modal refinements, his straddle of hard-bop and postbop so that it flirts with the avant-garde, and, most specifically, the way Trane’s pianist, McCoy Tyner, utilized the pentatonic scale as a touchstone for extended improvisation. The best songs on *In Paris* showcase these Trane-friendly advances that Young would later utilize on various Blue Note recordings in the 1960s.

The *In Paris* booklet reveals that Young and drummer Billy Brooks were recruited to Paris at the insistence of trumpeter Woody Shaw, who had been invited over by saxophonist Nathan Davis on the recommendation of Eric Dolphy just before Dolphy’s death in 1964. Working as the Nathan Davis Quartet, they deliver scintillating versions of Davis’ “Trane of Thought” and Shaw’s “Beyond All Limits” and “Zoltan.” (Young and Shaw would reprise the latter two compositions on Young’s classic *Unity* album for Blue Note, with Trane drummer Elvin Jones and tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson replacing Brooks and Davis.) *In Paris* also includes two Young originals—“Talkin’ About J.C.,” with the Champs-Elysees All-Stars octet; and “Luny Tune,” in a trio with drums and congas—that were recorded on Grant Green’s *Talkin’ About!* when Young returned to the States later in 1964, again playing alongside Jones.

Other bonuses include the Davis Quartet digging into a 14-minute version of Wayne Shorter’s “Black Nile,” and Young sliding over to piano and slipping some Monk into “Larry’s Blues.” In all, *In Paris* is recommended not only for fans of Blue Note-era Larry Young but also for acolytes of Shaw, who plays with the passion of a prodigy barely out of his teens. And the quality of the recording, captured at the Office of Radio Television France, is first-rate.



► “In a fruitful mid-period”: Larry Young, c. 1964

**BRITT ROBSON**

## THE ED PALERMO BIG BAND

**ONE CHILD LEFT BEHIND** (Cuneiform)



Over the course of four previous albums, the Ed Palermo Big Band has fashioned a career out of recasting the music of

Frank Zappa in large-format jazz settings—according to Palermo’s website, some 300 arrangements of Zappa compositions in all. This time around, they’ve begun to back away, a little. Roughly half of the tunes on *One Child Left Behind* are drawn from the Zappa canon; the rest are Palermo originals and other covers (Neil Young, Peggy Lee, Giorgio Moroder’s theme from *Scarface*). You can’t always tell which are which without a cheat sheet, but that’s a good thing. It means that the EPBB can survive just fine beyond its initial inspiration.

Of the Zappa tunes, both “Cletus Aw-reetus-Awrightus” and “The Grand Wazoo” come from the 1972 album named after the latter. Here they are given bright, nearly effusive arrangements, the former newly distinguished by Ted Kooshian’s tack piano solo and Bill Straub’s tenor saxophone, the other afforded an acces-

sible treatment that wouldn't have raised eyebrows if Doc Severinsen had snuck it in one night during his *Tonight Show* tenure. Three tracks, the funkier of the lot, feature the vocals of Zappa alumnus Napoleon Murphy Brock, but the true acolytes will likely be most curious about "Evelyn, A Modified Dog" and the band's take on Los Lobos' "Kiko and the Lavender Moon," both sung capably but not memorably by Patrice "Candy" Zappa, Frank's younger sister.

Palermo's three originals more than hold their own. The title of "Dirty White Bucks" might suggest a nod to Zappa's obsession with 1950s teen culture, but it's not a *Ruben & the Jets* outtake; rather, it's a real swinger of a tune, full of drama and animation. "Vengeance" projects a film-noir ambience while "The Goat Patrol" confirms that—to paraphrase an album title from the man—for this well-oiled 17-piece unit, one size doesn't fit all.

**JEFF TAMARKIN**

## JEREMY PELT

**#JIVECULTURE** (HighNote)



Trumpeter Jeremy Pelt's approach remains solidly postbop in feel and execution, with strong echoes of Miles Davis' mid- to late-'60s work—lent authority here by the presence of Davis alum Ron Carter on bass.

The opener, a Pelt original entitled "Baswald's Place," sets the tone. It's propulsive yet leavened with meditative tranquility, braced by the charged swing of the rhythm section (pianist Danny Grissett and drummer Billy Drummond, along with Carter) and the impressive focus of the soloists—especially, in this case, Grissett, who deepens his linear conceptions with richly bended harmonies and sonic textures. Pelt, meanwhile, attains a mellifluous, voice-like croon that's neither sentimental nor ironically detached but straightforward in its emotional resonance. His ideas sound fresh and original, even if his milky, vibrato-free tone and judicious use of silence make clear his ongoing debt to Miles.

Although there's no major thematic difference between "Part I" and "Part II" of this CD, the second section tends toward the more exploratory. "Rhapsody," taken at a ballad tempo yet playful in its seeming refusal to hew to any predictable

rhythmic or melodic pattern, is probably the most "free"-sounding offering here; the improvisations, paradoxically, solidify a sense of structure and logic atop the deceptively shapeless contours of the actual line. On "Desire," the set's closer, Grissett skitters and leapfrogs among intervals and octaves, creating openings and then filling them with dancing sparks, as Drummond lays down merry chuckles and gruff guffaws behind him. Carter maintains the rhythm while providing subtle elaborations as Pelt scurries above, all exemplifying the "Jive" of the title: playful signifying delivered with wit and purpose.

**DAVID WHITEIS**

## ALFREDO RODRIGUEZ

**TOCORORO** (Mack Avenue)



The *tocororo*, Cuba's national bird, is a brightly plumed songbird that, according to legend, dies of sadness when caged. The political symbolism is obvious: Alfredo Rodriguez, a Cuban expatriate, emigrated to the U.S. in 2009; as he puts it on his website, "Cuba was my cage." But this album is not a jeremiad or a manifesto; the overall feel is of life-affirming celebration. Along with co-producer Quincy Jones, Rodriguez creates an aural landscape that redeems longing and sorrow with uplift, militant in its refusal to succumb to bitterness or despair.

The opening track, Compay Segundo's "Chan Chan," is illustrative: Laced with trickster-like wit (juxtaposed rhythms, gaily colored textures), it's also infused with forward-thrusting drive and darkened by deep sonorities, all over the course of a little more than two minutes, exemplifying the mix of improvisational play and disciplined rigor that characterizes this music.

Rodriguez's keyboard work is richly imaginative both melodically and rhythmically; woodwind player Ariel Bringuez evinces similar dexterity, as does trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf. Percussionist Michael Olivera and bassists Reinier Elizarde (acoustic) and Richard Bona (electric) deftly negotiate the music's complex, varied rhythmic demands. Those demands are not solely Latin or even jazz-like in nature: Maalouf's "Kaleidoscope" dervish-dances in a Middle Eastern mode, and similar flavorings enrich the title tune, sung with aching emotional intensity by

Indian vocalist Ganavya Doraiswamy.

Doraiswamy and the other featured vocalists—Antonio Lizana, the duo Ibeyi, Bona and Rodriguez himself—contribute fully as lead instruments with exemplary timbral and harmonic facility. The disc's overriding themes—mourning and celebrating lost beauty while envisioning new freedoms—are manifested as eloquently in their singing as in the instrumental virtuosity that Rodriguez and his compatriots demonstrate throughout.

**DAVID WHITEIS**

## PATRICK WILLIAMS

**HOME SUITE HOME** (Varese Sarabande)



It's hardly surprising that composer-arranger-conductor Patrick Williams' big-band work is so grandly cinematic; over his

half-century in show business he has scored more than five-dozen films, most famously 1979's *Breaking Away*, which earned him an Oscar nod. He's also won five Emmys for his vast TV work and two Grammys, plus another 13 nominations, including one for Sinatra's *Duets*, a project (with a sequel) for which Williams was hand-selected by Ol' Blue Eyes. Williams returned the favor five years later with his sterling *Sinatraland*.

As is evident across the six instrumental tracks that fill most of the Grammy-nominated *Home Suite Home*, his influences are many. "Blue Mist," a curvaceous tribute to Catherine, Williams' wife of 53 years, seems a marvelous mélange of Richard Rodney Bennett, Henry Mancini, John Williams (no relation) and John Barry. The album's midsection comprises a trio of suites, one for each of Williams' children—Elizabeth, Greer and Patrick—jumbling hints of Tchaikovsky, Ellington, Gershwin, Billy May, legendary TV composer Earle Hagen and such noir masters as Elmer Bernstein, Max Steiner and Dimitri Tiomkin.

There are two solid tributes: "A Hefti Dose of Basie," for Neal Hefti, which sounds a lot like a meandering interpretation of Hefti's most celebrated Basie chart, "Lil Darlin'"; and the sly, sharp "That's Rich," for Buddy Rich. Three vocalists also figure into the heterogeneous mix. Tierney Sutton, winsome as ever, teams with the late Frank Sinatra Jr. on the breezy, globetrotting "I've Been Around," and Patti Austin swings brightly through the peppy "52nd & Broadway."

**CHRISTOPHER LOUDON**