

# RUDI RECORDS

BY KEN WAXMAN

Realization of one dream coupled with the lessening of funding for others convinced Massimo Iudicone in 2010 that it was time to create his own label. Since that time Rudi Records has released 32 productions by noteworthy musicians from its base in Terracina, about 50 miles southeast of Rome. Iudicone, who also produces music festivals, found the money situation made it difficult to organize concerts. "So I decided to start a record company to host and document the events that I would have liked in my festivals," he recalls. At the same time Iudicone, who had been working with The Italian Instabile Orchestra (IIO) since the '90s, was organizing projects for friends in the IIO. "We often talked about creating a record linked to the Orchestra, but we were never able to manage it," he explains. Instead that dream became Rudi.

The label's first jazz release was *Wind & Slap* featuring IIO members trombonists Giancarlo Schiaffini and Sebi Tramontana, with subsequent sessions featuring such Orchestra stalwarts as tenor saxophonist Daniele Cavallanti, drummer Tiziano Tononi and violinist Emanuele Parrini. Other well-respected Italian improvisers have recorded for the label as well as a scattering of outsiders including Austrian vocalist Katja Cruz and American saxophonist Sabir Mateen. Most Rudi CDs highlight small groups, but some feature larger ensembles. "I absolutely want to document and make a space for special projects and

for musicians who often suffer from lack of popularity but are excellent artists," states Iudicone. "I believe improvisation in music is one of the highest expressions of contemporary art; it's to live following the beat of our time."

This beat goes on in different fashions. "The choice of the projects is random," Iudicone elaborates. "Sometimes musicians propose a project, other times I suggest musicians get together and sometimes I know of a concert in advance and propose to record it. I prefer live recordings because improvised music takes on different breath and color there."

"Rudi Records seems to offer more visibility and promotion for every new recording coming out," explains Milan-based Cavallanti, who has helmed three Rudi sessions. "During the past 10 to 15 years I've become more interested in working out my music with large ensembles, so when I turned 60 the time had come to gather a 10-piece sort of 'dream band' for a two-night gig at the AH-UM Jazz Festival in Milano. We recorded live and Rudi Records was the natural choice to publish this project. *Sounds of Hope* with the Milano Contemporary Art Ensemble is a natural step and this time my idea was to present an ensemble that would feature a particular avant garde bunch of musicians of the city of Milano. The main difference in dealing with Rudi Records compared to other labels is that Massimo is a friend. I just pick up the phone, tell him: 'I've got a new project, which I want to publish with Rudi Records', send him the master and then we discuss who is going to pay for what."

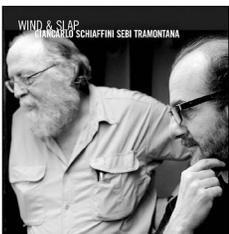
Depending on the project, mastering, pressing, design and other expenses are often split between Iudicone and the musicians involved, with

considerations such as the intricacies of international promotion taken into account. Although Iudicone is the label's only employee, graphic designer Ale Sordi came up with the label's distinctively linked backwards and forward facing double-R. Rudi was a nickname for Iudicone in his younger days. "But I was also attracted by the double-R sound as well as the intriguing graphic potential of the double R," Iudicone admits.

Two Rudi discs are on different formats. *Suoni dal Carcere* by vocalist Maria Pia De Vito and bassist Silvia Bolognesi is a DVD; while *Cruz' Hexaphone* featuring Oliver Lake is a CD/DVD set. "*Suoni dal carcere* (Sounds from a Prison) documents an extraordinary concert on the Island of Ventotene where many Italian intellectuals were confined during the Fascist era," recounts Iudicone. The place is full of history and the concert, thanks to excellent artistic quality of the performers was really nice, so I documented it as it took place on the grounds of an 18th century Bourbon prison. The visual part of *Hexaphone* is very important to the composition, so we decided with Katja to add the DVD."

He has no plans for future DVDs. As for LPs, "in Italy there's not a high request for it," states Iudicone. "Vinyl is very charming and it's making a comeback, but it's almost unmanageable, not because of the cost of production but the cost of packaging and shipping. It would be very expensive for the customer." As for downloads, most are available via streaming services. Plans were to make all albums available digitally, but "that market hasn't yet exploded with regards to improvised music," he notes. "I still prefer the physical copy, with its rigid jewel-box, which is well exposed on store shelves."

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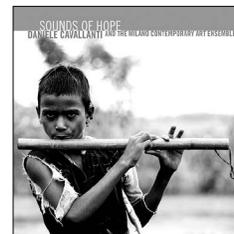
*Wind & Slap*  
Giancarlo Schiaffini Sebi Tramontana



*Hexaphone*  
Katja Cruz featuring Oliver Lake



*Canarie*  
Honest John



*Sounds of Hope*  
Daniele Cavallanti



*Live in Sant'Anna Arresi 2013*  
Dinamitri Jazz Folklore/ Amiri Baraka

## VOXNEWS

# ABOUT 40 YEARS AGO

BY SUZANNE LORGE

On May 11th-16th, 1976, saxophonist Stan Getz and singer/guitarist João Gilberto met up to play at a then-new jazz club in San Francisco, Keystone Korner, continuing the brilliant confabulation they'd begun on their seminal Brazilian jazz recording *Getz/Gilberto* (Verve). The pair had never worked together in a club before, even though they'd played Carnegie Hall and recorded two popular studio albums. Resonance Records has released the live recording from that week of performances—*Getz/Gilberto '76*, a stunning snapshot of several exceptional musicians at the peak of their careers. Besides Getz and Gilberto, the recording includes Joanne Brackeen (piano), Clint Houston (bass) and Billy Hart (drums).

On the first track, Getz introduces Gilberto, who'd stopped performing for about four years. After lauding the singer, Getz wonders aloud why such a talented musician would hesitate to play out in public. No matter—"he's here this week," he concludes. Listeners might likewise wonder why these tracks have remained under wraps for so long. But no matter—they're here now. The liner notes offer absorbing facts about the artists, club and bossa craze of the '60s, with

contributions from the club's owner Todd Barkan and journalist James Gavin. Just like *Getz/Gilberto*, the cover art for *Getz/Gilberto '76* is an abstract expressionist illustration by painter Olga Albizu. As confabulations go, this one is pretty fabulous.

On May 31st, 1978 Sarah Vaughan played Rosy's jazz club in New Orleans. Her voice was in fantastic shape, her regular trio of pianist Carl Schroeder, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Jimmy Cobb was behind her and NPR was there to record the show. Resonance has released a compilation of tracks from this gig as well; *Sarah Vaughan: Live at Rosy's* is two discs of standards showing off Vaughan's impressive versatility as a singer and naturalness as a performer.

The recording includes bits with Vaughan chatting amiably before the audience, ever graceful when someone mistakes her for another singer, and segueing effortlessly from one number to the next, always artful in her use of vibrato, phrasing and emotional understanding of a tune. This release also includes carefully wrought liner notes, with commentary by jazz journalists Will Friedwald and Gavin and interviews with Cobb and fellow vocalist Helen Merrill and vintage photos (one is of a setlist from the '70s in Vaughan's handwriting). Almost 40 years on, the thrill is still new.

Singer Alexis Cole, who was a finalist in both the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition in 2012 and the American Traditions Competition this

past February, will demonstrate why she is so prize-worthy at several NYC gigs this month: Tribeca Performing Arts Center as part of Highlights in Jazz (May 12th), Knickerbocker Bar & Grill (May 13th-14th); and Café Noctambulo (May 28th). She's likely to perform some material from her 2016 release, *Dazzling Blue: The Music of Paul Simon* (Chesky), jazz interpretations of Simon tunes from the full spectrum of his career, starting in the '70s through to the current decade. These aren't the usual Simon tunes, however; the only well-known number on her album is the 1973 song "Something So Right". Taken out of their pop context, these songs stand solidly as jazz tunes, a credit to Simon's songwriting and Cole's sensibilities as a jazz musician.

Frank Zappa aficionado and saxophonist Ed Palermo came of age as a musician and big band arranger in the late '70s. In the early '70s, however, he was still in high school and a member of the marching band. On *One Child Left Behind* (Cuneiform Records), his most recent release, Palermo pays homage to his formative musical training. The photos (Palermo playing trombone dressed as a box of French fries, for example) give key insights into how marching band helped to form Palermo's particularly jocular musical identity. Singers Candy Zappa (Frank's sister), Jenna McSwain, Mike James and Napoleon Murphy Brock keep pace with Palermo's high-energy, tongue-in-cheek delivery. No easy feat. ❖

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people that come from Chicago. There's Lou Rawls, Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions, Earth, Wind & Fire, The Chi-Lites. All of these groups and artists come from Chicago. Abbey Lincoln, Richard Davis, Jack DeJohnette, Nat "King" Cole. So many people from Chicago. And even though Miles Davis was born in East St. Louis his family came from Chicago. So Chicago was a big place for music and a lot of different styles.

**TNYCJR:** You've done so many things. Can you still be surprised by anything?

**CF:** I think so. When I first came to Europe I went to Greece and while I was there I investigated Greek music and in the process of investigating Greek music it led me to Baltic music. I went to India and I had the opportunity to play with great Indian musicians on both sitar, tabla and other Indian instruments. And then the other thing I got to do was to play with Gypsy musicians from Hungary. Actually, they wanted me to play with a group and there was a cimbalom [hammered dulcimer] instead of a piano, which is an instrument I had never heard of. And I was a little bit apprehensive about that because I wasn't sure how that was going to play because I was used to playing with piano players for harmony. But this guy was off-the-chart amazing. I played a concert in Granada, Spain and after the concert we met this young lady and she took us to a Gypsy after-hours place. It was Don Pullen, myself and Arthur Blythe. And we went and we stayed and jammed with these flamenco players, sort of like the blues players in America, the real blues players, you know? We stayed and jammed with these guys until 12 o'clock the next day. So the simple answer is yes, I can

still be surprised because of my understanding that I've always been surprised. I know I still know I don't know everything. ❖

For more information, visit [chicofreeman.com](http://chicofreeman.com). Freeman is at Dizzy's Club May 19th. See Calendar.

**Recommended Listening:**

- Chico Freeman— *Chico* (India Navigation, 1977)
- Jack DeJohnette Special Edition— *Tin Can Alley* (ECM, 1980)
- The Leaders— *Out Here Like This...* (Black Saint, 1987)
- Roots— *Saying Something* (In+Out, 1995)
- Chico Freeman & The Elvin Jones Project— *Elvin (A Tribute to Elvin Jones)* (Jive Music Austria, 2011)
- Chico Freeman 4-Tet— *Spoken Into Existence* (Jive Music Austria, 2015)

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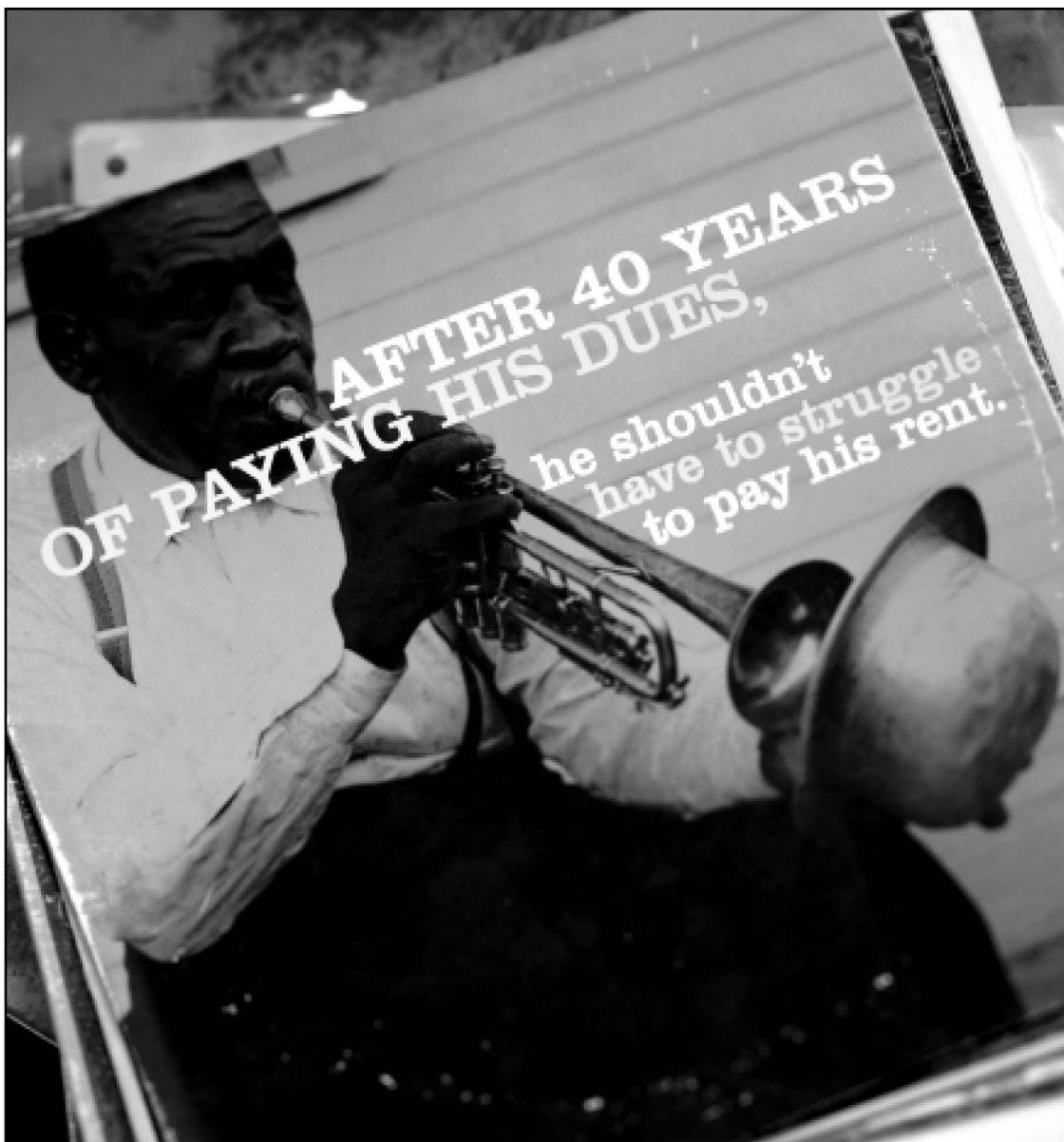
Another option not well exposed on Rudi is non-Italian improvisers. But not for any particular reason, notes Ludicone. For instance, *Canarie* by the Scandinavian Honest John quintet is on Rudi. "[The band's] Klaus Ellerhusen Holm contacted me to propose his project. I had no hesitation about publishing it and I still find it wonderful. For me good music is good music, from USA, from Europe or from everywhere. However, Rudi is also a local trademark, a label to accommodate the Italian improvised music projects in particular."

To this end he's particularly proud of two recent productions. The just-released *Live in Sant'Anna Arresi 2013* features the late American poet Amiri Baraka with the seven-piece Dinamitri Jazz Folklore ensemble led by alto saxophonist Dimitri Grechi Espinoza.

"I was very enthusiastic about the idea of producing this project which took almost three years to be brought to light," notes Livorno-based Espinoza, who has released three other Rudi CDs. "In the meantime Baraka died so Massimo and I were motivated even more to complete the job." He adds: "What I like most about Rudi is how Massimo is very careful about the musical content of the label, doesn't interfere in musical choices and tries to simplify all the business dealings. I knew of Massimo because my dear friend Emanuele Parrini told me about the way Massimo handles the label. I called him and after we spoke about different aspects I decided to send him the master of a recording session I had just made with Tito Mangialajo Rantzer on bass. He liked it and published it very quickly as *When We Forgot the Melody*." As for the differences between the duos and the Baraka CD Espinoza explains: "These recordings show different interests that I'm cultivating and Rudi Records seems to be very interested in following my creative process."

The next Rudi production, entitled *Tea Time*, is a first-time meeting between three major Italian improvisers: reedplayer Daniele D'Agaro, flutist Massimo De Mattia and bassist Giovanni Maier. "So many Italian musicians don't have space to perform and be known," notes Ludicone. "That's why in a large part this catalogue is meant to represent an Italian pathway within the larger world of improvised music. But again, I'm absolutely open to the world." ❖

For more information, visit [rudirecords.com](http://rudirecords.com). Artists performing this month include Oliver Lake May 1st at Village Vanguard and Alain Kirili Loft Apr. 15th; Daniel Carter May 7th at 541 with Nicolas Letman-Burtinovic; and Michaël Attias at Rye May 11th with Danny Gouker and Cornelia Street Café May 12th. See Calendar.



Photography donated by Brian Wilder. Musician photos: © photography by Bradley Smith.

Years ago, they pioneered the art of jazz /  
But many signed unfair contracts and got taken  
for everything they were worth / They are our  
elderly jazz musicians / Today, many of them live  
in shelters or are homeless because they can't afford  
to pay rent / We help these talented people find  
affordable housing, and work to help pay for it /  
But we need you to help us do it / After all they've  
given us, it's time to give them something back:  
their dignity / To learn more or to make a donation,  
call 1-800-JFA-JAMS or visit [www.jazzfoundation.org](http://www.jazzfoundation.org)

