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O'pening Thoughts

As the economy has reopened around the US, some states were ready and others were premature leading to more infections and deaths in favor of economics, politics and sometimes, ignorance. The pandemic is continuing to wreak havoc on people everywhere. While some nations (Germany) have arrested the rapid spread and hastened their careful re-engagement, others (USA, Brazil) have sunken deeper into the abyss. To be fair, there has been some progress where states have taken tough but necessary steps, NY, CT, RI, MA, NJ... For sure, our lives and culture have changed and transformation is upon us in many ways. Thankfully there are signs of vaccines coming from several places if you can afford it!

Leadership has been a focal point during this crisis, absent nationally and in some localities while there are some beacons of hope scattered around. The inconsistency is leading to a disparate healthcare situation, accelerated demise of the poor and elderly and a dissolution of the fabric of our democracy

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O'pening Thoughts cont.

as a wedge is implanted between factions of our population. Many artists recognize, detest and speak out courageously on the matter. Among the best statements are Virginia Schenck's Battle Cry, Arturo O'Farrill's Four Questions, and A Love Letter To Lena by Clairdee. Our Venue Review from saxophonist Scott Robinson is a reflective Shelter-In Place clip that has meaning!

But that's more politics than we care to discuss. (My editor told me I went overboard!) We've all been pushed to find new ways to enjoy our favorite music as most live venues are severely restricted. Those who've gone virtual are a mixed bag. One virtual experience we discovered is Qwest^{TV}, Quincy Jones' streaming service of live concerts (page 31). This is good entertainment value for sure.

This issue is packed with over 110 new reviews. Fifty received "Buy" scores and five had "Strong Buy" ratings. We covered the entire Jazz RulerTM but there are more straight ahead reviews in this issue. Some of the best are Brian Culbertson XX (Smooth - 93), Brian Andres Mayan Suite (Latin - 89), Jeff Hamilton Catch Me If You Can (Modern - 89), Diane Schuur

Running On Faith (Vocals - 84), and Dave Stryker Blue Soul (with the WDR Big Band - 84)

This quarter's Book Review is **Rhythmic Synchronicity** by Dafnis Prieto (85) is a series of synchopated rhythm exercises for groups. It can be fun and challenging as well. Prieto is also a part of the Pacific Mambo Orchestra The III Side (Big Band - 88)

We're excited about our future amidst all of the angst. These changes are bringing us new ways to think and a world of new opportunities.

Please share your thoughts, complaints and any ideas with us. Enjoy the music, and stay safe!

O

Unbiased Sound Advice from O's Place Jazz

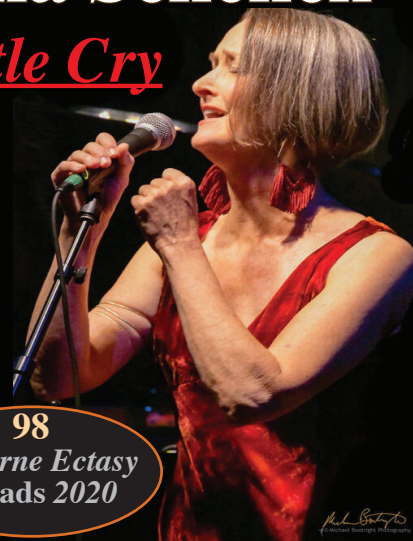
O's Vocal Features

We're at a crossroads in the nation, a silent Civil War where our truths have been challenged. Bad guys have been made good, and good guys been vilified to confuse and divide the nation. There's no thought of equality, only selfish justice for a few and a sense of satisfaction for the bigots who feel left behind. Virginia saw this challenge after the election of Trump and the accompanying divisive inequities, regressive politicking and racial divide. Her Battle Cry is an impactful recording with a lot of patriotism including stirring renditions of "America the Beautiful", and the "Pledge of Allegiance" with repurposed arrangements of "Abraham, Martin & John", "Strange Fruit" and "Sack Full of Dreams". It is soulful, inspirational call to us to reflect and become an active part of the solution.

Photo: Virginia Schenck

Virginia Schenck

Battle Cry



98

Airborne Ecstasy
Ballads 2020

Brenda Brown

Brenda Brown
2020 Ballads 77

Life Among Giants

Canadian vocalist Brenda Brown delivers warm, smoky vocals on top of swinging, classic, big band standards. She's backed by a full orchestra along with a guest appearance by guitarist Rag Schwager on "Splintered Dream". Other highlights are "They Can't Take That Away From Me", "If You Know Love" and "The Folks Who Live On The Hill", a duet with Alfie Zappacosta. Life Among Giants is a storybook, debut recording with musical pages from yesteryear! "the Sky", the soft tones of "Waves", "Horn Song" and the blues based romance of "Day Time Kind of Girl".

Sophie Fatu Love Is...

77
Extraordinary
Ballads 2020



Photo: Instagram

There's a young child dressed in a tux on the CD cover and yes, she's the headline singer on Love Is... For those of you who watch America's Got Talent, she's recognizable. Now 7 years old, she's got mad skills and will be fun to watch as she matures. In the mean time listen to her debut, backed by an orchestra directed by Rob Wasilauski with Jeff Hamilton (d), Chuck Berghofer (b) and Tom Ranier (p) holding down the rhythm section. But this is Sophie's show and she's giving it her all. She's much more than a cute novelty; she has great pitch and a strong voice. Watch out!