

cool delivery underscored by immense emotional warmth, shines forth, while Ganz and Versace prove sublime masters of subtlety. There's romantic love found: a diaphanous "Secret Love"; brightly contented "What a Difference a Day Made," propelled by Ganz's lustrous "Mr. Sparkle"; and misty "My Funny Valentine." And love lost: a breezily blasé "Gone With the Wind"; gorgeously ruminative "Indian Summer"; and McGarry's scalding, vengeful "Losing Strategy #4."

Gentle reminders to love thy neighbor drive Benny Golson and Kenny Dorham's "Fair Weather." Self-honesty, ideally igniting self-love, is examined within an adaptation of Egberto Gismonti's "Palhaço," while ancestral love (or lack thereof) ignites McGarry's haunting family-tree dissection "Climb Down," with the traditional Irish folk song "Whiskey You're the Devil," featuring drummer Obed Calvaire, added as an intriguing coda. As a fitting endnote to this superbly multihued journey of the heart, the trio, alongside guest trumpeter Ron Miles, shapes a brief, soothingly joyous "All You Need Is Love."

CHRISTOPHER LOUDON

NEW FACES

STRAIGHT FORWARD (Posi-Tone)



Several other contemporary jazz labels—Blue Note and Mack Avenue come to mind—delight in taking their up-and-comers and placing them in a room together to see what happens and, presumably, re-up the company identity. For Posi-Tone, that means the sextet of Josh Lawrence (trumpet), Roxy Coss (saxophone), Behn Gillette (vibes) and a rhythm section consisting of Theo Hill (piano), Peter Brendler (bass) and Vinnie Sperrazza (drums). The 11-song set is produced by label boss Marc Free, who informs in a press release that the band's instructions were to first revisit material from previous Posi-Tone releases, then work up some new repertoire.

Both halves are equally solid. While the group itself may be a new and, presumably, temporary entity, its components share a sensibility (perhaps summed up by the album's two-word title). "Happy Juice," composed by pianist Jon Davis, briefly places the focus on Lawrence, Coss and Gillette, each of

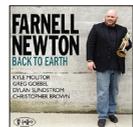
whom offers concise, tightly drawn solos, but doesn't neglect to emphasize the strengths of the ensemble. That tack holds throughout. "West Village," from organist Brian Charette, finds Lawrence, working his mute, and Gillette trading off before Coss finds a harmony that suits her, and Art Hirahara's "I'm OK" allows Hill to open up wide, pointing the way for the sax, vibes and trumpet submissions that occupy the jam's second half.

Of the new material, two tunes by Lawrence, the briskly rendered "Hush Puppy" and the Latin-grooving "Frederico," are particularly sparkling, while the three Gillette inclusions shoot for greater complexity and interactivity. "Follow Suit," the album's penultimate tune, is a corker, evidence on its own that any one of these players is worth pursuing outside of the all-star setting.

JEFF TAMARKIN

FARNELL NEWTON

BACK TO EARTH (Posi-Tone)



Trumpeter Farnell Newton's *Back to Earth* is ... a little odd. Not in its sound, which is straight-ahead, swinging hard bop (with some funkier grooves thrown in). But why would a small-group leader employ an unwieldy but powerful frontline instrument like the trombone, only to let it outside the ensemble passages only three times throughout 11 tracks?

Instead, Newton uses Kyle Molitor like a bass: He's there to underline the themes, and gets tossed a few thank-you bones. (Incidentally, the actual bassist, Dylan Sundstrom, takes *no* solos.) Clearly this album is meant to highlight Newton, and to good ends. He's a fine trumpeter, a descendant of Freddie Hubbard but less aggressive, more horizontal. As if to make that very point, he covers Hubbard's arrangement of his own "Arietis." Where Hubbard might have furiously built stacks of notes, Newton thoughtfully builds blocks of melody. He's more introspective still on the clave tune "El Gaucho," playing lip trills and limber figures with sweetness and sentiment.

Back to Earth does have a second-chair soloist—pianist Greg Goebel, who does handsome, emotionally complex work on "Transcendentals" and drum-

mer Christopher Brown's "Back to Earth" (the only tune, along with "Arietis," Newton didn't write), not to mention the plangent chording of "Redefining the Norm." But his prominence only highlights Molitor's lack thereof. His solos on "The Roots," "Road to the South" and "Open Your Mind" are propulsive and satisfying. But if that's all the second horn gets, why have it at all? Newton's decision to sideline him diminishes a solid record with a wasted trombonist.

MICHAEL J. WEST

ED PALERMO BIG BAND

THE ADVENTURES OF

ZODD ZUNDGREN (Cuneiform)



Even in jazz, the importance of interpretative art is still questioned. *The Adventures of Zodd Zundgren* is Exhibit

A—OK, Z—for the defense. Even as guitarist/saxophonist/bandleader Ed Palermo contrasts Frank Zappa and Todd Rundgren in his liner notes, describing the opposite roles of the two rock polymaths, he and his eccentric big band brilliantly reconcile their oeuvres.

It would be a mistake to suggest that Palermo renders them indistinguishable. For one, he concentrates lyrical arrangements on Rundgren's side: seven, to Zappa's two. For another, instrumental or no, Zappa's ruthless complexity is an easy contrast to Rundgren's (admittedly ambitious) tunesmithery. Palermo may stack Rundgren's "Influenza" with woodwind densities (and baritonist Barbara Cifelli's killer lead), call-and-response brass and a fiendish Katie Jacoby violin solo, but it remains immediate and ingratiating. Nor does layering sunny doo-wop vocals onto the tendrils of Zappa's "Echidna's Arf (Of You)" simplify them.

What these treatments do instead is to provide the two composers entrees to each other. Following "Echidna's Arf" is still a maze, but its harmony segues beautifully into the luminous vibes of "Hello It's Me," which has vocal harmonies of its own and gorgeous horn charts that flow naturally therefrom. (Not coincidentally, the harmonies of both are all overdubs of singer Bruce McDaniel.) Similarly, Rundgren's blues-rock jam "Kiddie Boy" follows organically from Zappa's propulsive "Big Swifty," not least because Palermo's FZ-indebted guitar

workout threads through both tunes.

Zappa and Rundgren do occasionally cross each other's turf. The latter's "Yer Fast" shares the former's preoccupations with casual sex (and colloquial spellings), and Palermo sequences Zappa's goofy "Montana" alongside Rundgren's goofy "Emperor of the Highway" (with Mothers alum Napoleon Murphy Brock singing on both). Ultimately, Palermo makes both artists' music sound like something Ed Palermo would do. **MICHAEL J. WEST**

HERMETO PASCOAL & GRUPO VICE VERSA

VIAJANDO COM O SOM (THE LOST '76 VICE-VERSA STUDIO SESSION) (Far Out)



Whether it's true or apocryphal, Miles Davis' alleged description of Hermeto Pascoal as "the most impressive musician in the world" (sometimes altered to "one of the most important") has served the ultra-eccentric Brazilian multi-instrumentalist well. Davis used Pascoal on three tracks on 1971's *Live-Evil*; that credit, plus the quote, has guaranteed that the visually striking artist, who's long been a hero at home, would always have somewhat of a following in the international jazz community. And here we are, 47 years later, ready for more.

Pascoal is now 81, sports a mane of wild white hair and beard to match, and is still active. But *Viajando Com O Som* dates from just five years after his one-off with Miles. The backstory dictates that the music herein was cut in two days and the master tape subsequently lost. It's now resurfaced and good thing that it has—it's quite a find.

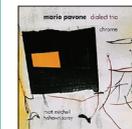
Unlike other Pascoal works, the instrumentation utilized on the 1976 session isn't especially colorful (he's fond of using toys, found objects, etc.). Here we simply have the leader sticking to conventional electric piano and flute, accompanied by a rhythm section, a few more flutes, some saxophones, a second piano, percussion and guitarist Toninho Horta, the only player other than Pascoal to enjoy a high-profile reputation worldwide.

While not dissimilar to much other mid-'70s jazz, *Viajando Com O Som*, with its preponderance of jingling bells, funky bottom, trilling flutes, psychedelic meanderings, free intrusions, squawking horns and maniacal chants, is unapolo-

getically experimental throughout. "Casinha Pequena," especially, the 26-plus-minute finale, borrows liberally from the aforementioned Mr. Davis' own polyrhythmic, Afro-centric work of the period, only to break down into joyful percussive chaos in its final minutes. You may ask yourself what that was that you just heard. Then you'll want to hear it again. **JEFF TAMARKIN**

MARIO PAVONE'S DIALECT TRIO

CHROME (Playscape)



Bassist Mario Pavone has been digging into the depths and moving toward the outer limits for half a century, both as a flexible backbone of and a communicative partner in bands led by Paul Bley, Bill Dixon and Thomas Chapin, and as a leader with expansive visions all his own. The jazz avant-garde holds him near and dear, but his language doesn't necessarily lean hard left. In fact, it's downright direct and pointed in presentation. Or at least that's the case when his Dialect Trio gets down to business.

This particular outfit, first introduced on record with 2015's *Blue Dialect*, is robust and rubbery. And it's a group that's only gotten better over time. With the leader's bass serving as catalyst and pugilist, protean drummer Tyshawyn Sorey whirling behind the kit and pianist Matt Mitchell connecting the dots and painting angular canvases above and within the fray, *Chrome* proves to be utterly captivating. It's most certainly an information-dense event, but don't let the occasional ruckus fool you: This is one cohesive and coherent beast of a record.

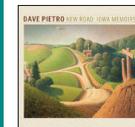
The locked-in dynamic that introduces "Cobalt" and the stretched approach that follows come to serve as two sides of the same coin here. Order needs freedom to place it in sharp relief, and the Dialect Trio is more than willing to demonstrate how to reconcile those elements of expression. "Ancestors"—the longest track on the album, clocking in at just over eight minutes—is particularly inspired in its marriage of the two. The occasional mutated Monk-ish strain reveals itself in the attractive angular-

ity of the music, but this is a band that essentially speaks with its own patois.

DAN BILAWSKY

DAVE PIETRO

NEW ROAD: IOWA MEMOIRS (ArtistShare)



In 2011 and 2012 Dave Pietro spent three weeks as an artist-in-residence at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. He is a native New

Englander and current New Yorker. Iowa was new to him: the corn fields to the horizon; the small plain towns where time had stopped; the welcoming people. He loved it. So he wrote this suite about it.

Pietro is a well-established reed player who has worked in the best orchestras (Maria Schneider, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Ryan Truesdell, Darcy James Argue). That he is also an accomplished composer-arranger might surprise people. His charts for quintet, with all their counterpoint lines and independent parts, achieve unusual fullness. In his carefully assembled designs, themes keep reappearing within rich blends.

His creative process is equal parts intellect and emotion. The melodies of "The Sanctuary" and "Heartland" are lasting memories preserved as music. "Sunrise on the Muscatine Highway" portrays anticipation. Gary Versace's piano is all glittering hints, and Pietro's soprano saxophone lines gather like breaking light. When Pietro's meticulous forms open for soloists, the responses by Versace, trumpeter Alex Sipiagin and bassist Johannes Weidenmueller offer deep personal reflections on Pietro's experience. As for Pietro, *New Road* is a breakout. He is a veteran but has never before displayed the full range of his strengths as composer, arranger, leader and soloist. On four reed instruments (alto and soprano saxophones, flute, clarinet), he achieves four sounds of rarefied purity, and he improvises in fresh, concise, complete ideas.

A personal note of full disclosure: I was a graduate student at the University of Iowa. I know the imagery that inspired "Sleep Prairie, Sleep." The quietly majestic melody came to Pietro while he was driving through Iowa farmlands in winter. I recognize that austerity, but until now I never understood how beautiful those lonely prairies are.

THOMAS CONRAD