

Ernie Krivda *Requiem For A Jazz Lady*

CAPRI RECORDS 74140

★★★★

Few saxophonists on the scene today play the horn like Clevelander Ernie Krivda. Just ask fellow Ohioan Joe Lovano, who maintains that Krivda is a strong influence.

While Lovano has gone the post-bop route and beyond, Krivda, now 70, is a modernist, but his tone evokes Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins, as well as other tenor titans of years past. This could be because Krivda's focus is on a full-bodied saxophone sound, which in his case is rich, brawny and colorful.

Here, Krivda contributes six originals and one standard, the ballad "I'll Close My Eyes," which he plays romantically. His quartet members include bassist Marion Hayden, pianist Lafayette Carthon and drummer Renell Gonsalves.

Krivda wails on the opener, "The Remarkable Mr. Black." His tonal variations and melodies are marvelous. We're reminded of Horace Silver's classic "Señor Blues" on the Latinish "Great Lakes Gumbo," and just when you think you've heard Krivda's saxophone at its most prodigious, he gives you more fresh sounds on "Emerald." Ending with the title tune, dedicated to his hometown, Krivda gets such a plaintive sound that some Clevelanders (and perhaps others) could shed a tear or two.

—Bob Protzman

Requiem For A Jazz Lady: The Remarkable Mr. Black; I'll Close My Eyes; Questions; Emerald; Great Lakes Gumbo; Little Face; Requiem For A Jazz Lady. (50:47)

Personnel: Ernie Krivda, tenor saxophone; Lafayette Carthon, piano; Marion Hayden, bass; Renell Gonsalves, drums.

Ordering info: caprirecords.com



Carol Welsman *Alone Together*

WELCAR MUSIC 368

★★★★

Do you have to be a great scat singer to be a great jazz singer? Neither Frank Sinatra nor Billie Holiday scatted much, but both are among the greatest jazz singers of all time.

Still, brilliant vocal improvisation sure doesn't hurt, as the Canadian-born singer/pianist Carol Welsman proves on several tracks of her new album, *Alone Together*. Welsman, a six-time Juno nominee with an international following, scats in a way that discloses a keen harmonic sense and complements her highly proficient piano playing. She combines the two in her uptempo, hard-bop treatment of the Sinatra standard "Day By Day," scattling along with a soaring, rewarding piano solo. And her a cappella scat introduction to the title tune is a knockout.

Great scattling is just one of the tools in Welsman's arsenal on this, her 11th album. Backed by a stellar band—bassist Rufus Reid, drummer Lewis Nash, trumpeter Wallace Roney and guitarist Jay Azzolina—she displays unerring taste with her choice of material, bringing a spot-on reading of Eddie Jefferson's "Disappointed" (a vocalese version of Charlie Parker's solo on "Lady, Be Good") and an exquisite version of "Killing Time" by Jule Styne and Carolyn Leigh.

—Allen Morrison

Alone Together: Day By Day; It Might As Well Be Spring; Sand In My Shoes; My Ship; Alone Together; Disappointed; If The Moon Turns Green; You Taught My Heart To Sing; The Blues Are Out Of Town; I Didn't Know About You; Killing Time. (49:39)

Personnel: Carol Welsman, piano, vocals; Rufus Reid, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; Wallace Roney, trumpet; Jay Azzolina, guitar (3, 6, 8, 10); Steven Kroon, percussion (3).

Ordering info: carolwelsman.com



Ben Wendel/ Harish Raghavan/ Nate Wood *ACT II*

SELF RELEASE

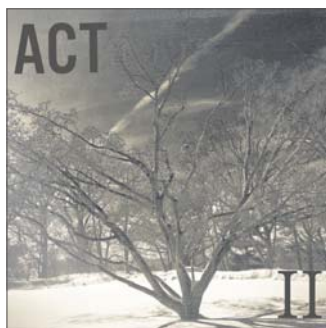
★★★★½

Reedist Ben Wendel, bassist Harish Raghavan and drummer Nate Wood have worked together for years in the groove-heavy electronically leaning quintet Kneebody, fashioning a rigorous, hard-hitting ensemble sound. A few years back they formed the superb low-key trio ACT to play together in a less pressured atmosphere, and the experience has been rewarding for listeners.

Raghavan wrote most of the eight original pieces and some of them have been featured in other contexts: Wendel's buoyant, attractively slaloming "Unforeseeable" was intended as part of his cool "Seasons Project," an online video endeavor, but did not get used, while Raghavan's "Bass Song" previously turned up under the name "Raghavan" on drummer Eric Harland's *Vipassana* album a couple of years back.

Not everything on the trio's second album is an act of creative repurposing, but the practice demonstrates the unit's interest in exploring new angles in familiar material. The album closes with Wendel's crafty rewrite of Cole Porter's "Night And Day" as "Day And Night"—a nifty, syncopated jam spiked by deft group handclaps and woozy, almost dubby melodic washes.

—Peter Margasak



Bret Higgins' Atlas Revolt

TZADIK 7813

★★★★½

Led by bassist-composer Bret Higgins, this Toronto quintet has turned in a winningly melodic debut of carbonated chamber jazz.

Unpredictable and swinging, *Bret Higgins' Atlas Revolt* is an exceptional album.

The front line is piano man Robbie Grunwald, electric guitarist Tom Juhas and violinist Aleksandar Gajic. Higgins provides the backdrop and drummer Joshua Van Tassel adds color. This jaunty and fearless fivesome seem born to play with one another, their instruments blending so seamlessly one often can't identify the lead.

The bassist has a knack for melody and knows how to develop one. His compositions feel strategic: On "El Metate," he and Van Tassel lay down a deliberate, rocking groove as Gajic waxes florid and Juhas channels Duane Eddy. The tension in the tune is palpable. Suspense and drama also suffice "Vorticism," a showcase for Van Tassel's mastery of stick, cymbal and dynamics. While he doesn't quite solo here, the rhythm bed he lays down makes the tune magnetic.

This sensual album, marbled with Latin, soul, gypsy and Middle Eastern spicing, is one of the essential releases of the year. —Carlo Wolff



ACT II: Unforeseeable; Bass Song; Something New; Memorial; Subway Song; Yes You; Last; Day And Night. (46:19)

Personnel: Ben Wendel, tenor saxophone, melodica, bassoon; Harish Raghavan, bass; Nate Wood, drums.

Ordering info: itunes.com

Bret Higgins' Atlas Revolt: Atlas Revolt; El Metate; All About The Starry Dark; Zagazig; Electric Sinner; Sanan; Meat For Dogs; Flashbulb Memories; Vorticism; Jakaranda. (43:00)

Personnel: Bret Higgins, bass; Aleksandar Gajic, violin; Robbie Grunwald, piano; Tom Juhas, electric guitar; Joshua Van Tassel, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: tzadik.com