

Jazzwise

THE BEST ALBUMS OF

Every year, *Jazzwise* asks its critics to vote for their favourite albums of the year. These are the ten albums that got the most votes in 2015, including extracts from the original reviews



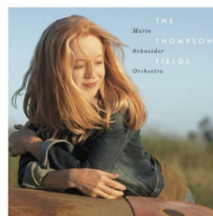
Kamasi Washington

The Epic
Brainfeeder BFCD050

Kamasi Washington (ts), Thundercat, Miles Mosley (b), Ronald Bruner Jr, Tony Austin, (d) Patrice Quinn (v), Ryan Porter (tb), Brandon Coleman and Cameron Graves (p, kys) plus strings. Rec. date not stated

The title is not to be taken lightly. With scale being such a defining feature of this music it is worth noting that there are 172 minutes to contend with, and it is to Washington's credit that the output is justified, first and foremost because the artistic ambition matches the sweeping production. Moving from hard swing to funk to some of the digital age sensibilities scoped out by Thundercat, this is an album of progressive present day thinking that willfully acknowledges its debt to the past, as befits the ongoing relationship between the two.

Kevin Le Gendre



Maria Schneider Orchestra

The Thompson Fields

Artist Share 0137

Maria Schneider (cond, comp, arr), Tony Kadleck, Greg Gisbert, Augie Haas, Mike Rodriguez (t, flhn), Keith O'Quinn, Ryan Keberle, Marshall Gilkes, George Flynn (tb), Steve Wilson (as, ss, cl, fl, alt fl), Dave Petro (as, ss, cl, fl, alto fl, bass fl, piccolo); Rich Perry (ts), Donny McCaslin (ts, cl, fl), Scott Robinson (bar s, b cl, alto cl, ci), Frank Kimbrough (p), Gary Versace (acc), Lage Lund (g), Jay Anderson (b), Clarence Penn (d) and Rogerio Boccato (perc). Rec. date not stated

Schneider, who delights in breaking open the rigid structure of cyclical forms in jazz with writing that explores theme, variation, development and recapitulation is also a master of shifting tonal densities – one glance at the doubles the reed section have to contend with means some of the tone colours she dreams up are breathtaking.

Stuart Nicholson



Loose Tubes

Arriving
Lost Marble LM008

Eddie Parker (f, kys), Dai Pritchard (cl), Steve Buckle, Iain Ballamy, Mark Lockheart, Julian Nicholas, Ken Stubbs, Julian Arguelles (s), Lance Kelly, Chris Batchelor, Ted Emmett, John Eacott, Paul Edmonds, Noel Langley (t), John Harborne, Steve Day, Paul Taylor, Richard Pywell (tb), Ashley Slater (b tb, tb, MC), Richard Henry (b tb), Dave Powell (tba), Django Bates (kys, Eb horn), John Parricelli (g), Steve Watts (b), Martin France (d), Thobi Lipere, and Louis Petersen Matjeka (perc). Rec. 13, 14, 15 September 1990 and May 2014

The third instalment in the 'live' trilogy of recordings from Loose Tubes' farewell residency at Ronnie Scott's in 1990. *Arriving* comes with a few unexpected bonus tracks: compositions commissioned by BBC Radio 3 from the already legendary Ronnie's 30th anniversary comeback residency last year by the resurrected group.

Selwyn Harris



Charles Lloyd

Wild Man Dance

Blue Note

Charles Lloyd (ts), Gerald Clayton (p), Joe Sanders (b), Gerald Cleaver (d) with guests Sokratis Sinopoulos (lyra) and Miklós Lukács (cimbalom). Rec. 2013

This is a truly memorable album; perhaps the finest of Lloyd's career and destined to become a classic. This remarkable sixpiece suite was commissioned by the Jazztopad Festival in Wroclaw, Poland and was recorded at the piece's premiere. It marks a memorable return to the Blue Note label for whom Lloyd last recorded in 1985. The addition of Sinopoulos and Lukács subtly alter the sonic ambience of the saxophone quartet, their presence adding mystery and gravitas, while Cleaver emerges as a superb colourist as well as time-keeper, perfectly framing Lloyd's lyrical flights.

Stuart Nicholson



Rudresh Mahanthappa

Bird Calls

ACT 9581-2

Rudresh Mahanthappa (as), Adam O'Farrill (t), Matt Mitchell (p), François Moutin (b) and Rudy Royston (d). 4-5 August 2014

Each piece represents an examination of Charlie Parker's legacy in the here and now in a "detailed and holistic way". Mahanthappa's unselfconscious drawing on musical tradition of the Carnatic music of South India during his improvisations – an ornament here, a melismatic bend there – adds a degree of colour and the unexpected. This blend of the local and the global (yes, Parker's music went global in the 1940s thanks to the gramophone record) is what makes this take of Parker wholly original and absorbing.

Stuart Nicholson