

improvisational enhancements to the existing melodic line. Michela's reading of "Fool" is so personal it might embarrass even Oprah. Even though her scatting might best be heard as a work in progress, she has written inventive vocalese lyrics for "Look For" and "Happen" and injects them into those tunes with no seams showing. Her out of tempo *a cappella* use of the verse for "Easily" is worth hearing over and over, as is her reading of "Valentine" in which she catches the lyric's playful ironies, missed by all those singers who choose to treat the song with odic solemnity, as if they were singing to a statue. The trio is rounded out by bassist, Paolo Benedettini and drummer, Allesandro Minetto, both of whom know subtlety when they play it. The subtitle of the set is "Chet On Our Minds" and the hook is that the repertoire is drawn from songs the trumpeter/singer made good use of, either instrumentally or vocally or both, during his troubled Jazz sojourn (1959-88) on our planet. Michela Lombardi has returned Chet's favor by making her own exquisite use of them.

(3) finds Barbara Casini (2/06, p.40) singing the songs of Chico Buarque, a Brazilian singer, composer, dramatist whose work is often said to contain commentary on social/political/cultural issues. The CD's title translates to "First Word," and while one might want to assume that the lyrics Ms. Casini sings, in Portuguese, might deal with relatively weighty matters, I cannot verify as much, since my rather fumbling translation of some of the titles (i.e. - "Basta Um Dia" means "One Day is Enough" and "Até Pensei" translates into "Until I Thought") suggests otherwise. The music I hear is rather ethnic in character, quite pleasant, often implying sadness in the downturn of the melodic lines. Ms. C's translucently airy soprano floats on the surface of her guitar accompanists' gently rhythmic plectering, the way a sailboat might skim across the surface of a slightly white-capped sea, always safely within sight of shore. This is background music for drinking pina colodas on a sunny terrace, somewhere in the trouble free zone.

(4) According to Luigi Pignatiello's internet *sito ufficiale*, the guitarist/vocalist has studied at the Berklee School of Music, and had some experience playing in New York City. Further than that, he seems to have had considerable international exposure. His producer's liner blurb claims that he's been influenced by George Benson in both his guitar playing and vocalizing, and is vocally superior to his model. I doubt that the claim is worth discussing, since there are but three vocal tracks ("Spain/Found Out/Numb") on the CD, the third attributed to someone named Floyd who was apparently in the "pink" when he composed it. Luigi's band mates, finding themselves in that precise hue at the session, and evidently fearful of getting too comfortably numb, bestirred themselves to contribute vocally to this one track, which seems to involve some electronic enhancement in support of the lyric's schlock profundities. Aside from this dip into the Rock crock, and a few of the usual repertorial suspects ("Spain/Favorite/Adagio/Insensatez/Island"), what remains are four academic-sounding

originals ("Pathways/Trip/Vincent/Angel") by the guitarist himself. I liked the brief sitar allusions on "Favorite," but for the rest, I found, as did our previous reviewer (1/06, p.123), a certain virtuosic emptiness at the center of Pignatiello's playing.

Alan Bargebuhr

1) JEFF HACKWORTH, HOW LITTLE WE KNOW, BIG BRIDGE 1003.

Sunset Eyes / How Little We Know / They All Say I'm the Biggest Fool / My Lean Baby / Tenderly / How Am I to Know* / All or Nothing at All / I'm Just a Lucky So and So* / Why Do I Love You / This is Always* / Don't Take Your Love from Me. 57:32.*

Hackworth, ts; Peter Hand, g*; Norman Simmons, p; Peter Washington, b; Chip White, d. April 12, 2006, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

2) SHIRANTHA BEDDAGE, ROOTS AND BRANCHES, JAZZ EXCURSION 106.

Turrentine / Nearly There / Danushka's Dance / As the Flower Grows / Nightly News / Seoul Sister / RSVP / I'll Be Gone / Le Petit Grenouille. 59:37.

Beddage, bari s, ts, ss; Michael Stryker, p; Ryan Kotler, b; Jared Schongin, d. July 17, 2005 & Jan. 7, 2006, Canandaigua, NY.

Two saxophonists take different approaches to the mainstream through their acoustic units on these two recent releases. Both pay homage to the saxophone giants of Jazz. However, they follow two opposite paths in doing so.

(1) features tenor saxophonist Jeff Hackworth with his quartet and quintet in a program of standards. He prefers the Straight-Ahead approach to Jazz, where comfortable rhythms and improvised themes come surrounded by a musical conversation that lasts long after the performance has ended. They're memorable themes that we carry around in our heads for days and weeks afterwards. His session swings with a happy mood. In the album's liner notes, he's compared (accurately) to tenor greats Gene Ammons, Stanley Turrentine, and Houston Person. It takes a big heart to let go like that. Hackworth proves his genuine character with a soulful tenor approach that carries a loose swing through each selection. However, the sound that he achieves with this unit is far from unique.

Pianist Norman Simmons and guitarist Peter Hand deliver comfortable interludes that mesh well with the leader's interpretations. The session runs so smooth that you eventually lose sight of Hackworth's quest for adventure. He's so subtle that the program drifts on cruise control for too long. One theme morphs into the next with nothing but pleasant daydreams. There are exceptions, however, that reveal some innovation. The quartet's up-tempo interpretation of "All or Nothing at All" runs with heated excitement, turning bassist Peter Washington loose for a spirited takedown. The Blues-based "I'm Just a Lucky So and So" reveals Hackworth's Buffalo, New York roots and the good times that can be had when we "get down." Guitarist Hand delivers a powerful Blues

statement in support. The remainder of the session bears witness to the care that we take when we wish to bring everything into place as it's been done before. It still works wonders for the soul, though, and lives on in the spirit of good Jazz.

A debut album, **(2)** features saxophonist Shirantha Beddage with his quartet in a program of original compositions. Originally from North Bay, Ontario, Canada, he's emigrated to New York and beyond in his search for direction. With a firm foundation that recalls Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, and Stanley Turrentine, he builds each selection seamlessly as a monument that has been reworked to his own liking. Beddage soars over and around each theme, expressing a wide range of emotions and having fun at it. He multi-tracks tenor and soprano on one selection, showing a natural conversational control in his work. Rhythmic variety, too, gives the session a big lift, as the saxophonist and his stellar team launch sparks of high energy interwoven with periods of quiet solace. He prefers the baritone saxophone, giving up 7 of the program's 9 selections to its magical allure. Fluid and accurate, he makes the instrument speak as a voice with all its nuances and inflections.

Beddage's compositions ring in lovely melodies that are embellished and danced upon. Double bassist Ryan Kotler, pianist Michael Stryker and drummer Jared Schonig each step out on occasion with respectable solo work that gives the session plenty of action. As a unit, the quartet forms a cohesion that lasts. Supporting the saxophonist's fruitful adventures, they merge comfortably alongside his lyrical outings. Soaring weightlessly, he steers his big baritone saxophone through ballet-like movements that seem to float on delicate branches. From the roots of Jazz, he's created branches for his saxophone conversations that reach out. Shirantha Beddage brings fresh ideas to the mainstream world and comes recommended.

Jim Santella

SYLVAIN GUERINEAU, TER, MARGE 36.

Two untitled tracks, 44:05.

Guérineau, as; Benjamin Duboc, b; Didier Lasserre, d. September 15, 2005 location not listed.

On the evidence of these two improvisations, recorded in front of a small but fairly appreciative audience, Sylvain Guérineau is one of those players that just takes a little while to warm up. Once he does, he brings the other musicians with him, transforming a fairly banal trio improv into something special.

On the thirty-minute opener, these three musicians follow, with fidelity that sometimes borders on the annoyingly obsessive, the model set forth in the states in the middle 1960s, where waves and cascades of heat-driven fury swell and abate. In post-Coltrane fashion, climaxes are repeated and numerous, and in order for such a

venture to be successful, what happens between moments of white-hot intensity needs to sustain interest. As this trio loosens up, they transform some fairly derivative music into wonderful conversation; Guérineau begins to go beyond his Dolphyesque intervallic jumps into some very interesting timbral explorations, eschewing any overtly manneristic homage in favor of what sound like some very nice on-the-spot discoveries. The trio takes on an introspective quality, even in the middle of the most passionate playing, syncopating, interlocking and responding in more and more detail.

While I'm not sure if it was recorded first or second, the shorter of the two improvisations is the gem here, largely a study in telegraphic phrases bounced back and forth between players with whiplash intensity. There are some high-frequency bells or cymbals, presumably courtesy of Lasserre, that add a cherubic quality to what turns out to be a really remarkable performance after all.

Marc Medwin

JENNIFER HALL, A WEST COAST TRIBUTE TO GERRY MULLIGAN, SEA BREEZE 3085.

Five Brothers@ / Elevation# / Dragonfly\$ / Apple Core% / Festive Minor^ / Summer's Over / Rico Apollo\$ / Line for Lyons# / Walkin' Shoes% / Rocker (Rock Salt)^ / Cat Walk@ / Bernie's Tune*.*

Hall, bari s; Carl Saunders, tpt#; Jack Sheldon, tpt, vcl!; Scott Whitfield, tbn^; Tom Kubis, ss\$; Terry Harrington, cl, ts%; Roger Neumann, bari s@; Josh Nelson, p; Dave Stone, b; Santo Savino, d. 2006, Granada Hills, CA.

Some ten years ago I heard Branford Marsalis talking with students at Hamilton College, at one point allowing that, as a result of playing baritone sax for Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, he had come to think of it as an unwieldy beast, a beast with which he more often wrestled than played. He's not alone in that opinion. But I have to say I've always been a sucker for it. I can't for the life of me understand why bari didn't really establish itself as a soloing instrument until the forties. Whatever the reason, since Serge Chaloff, Pepper Adams, and Gerry Mulligan, bari-players have participated in every new current in creative improvised music. Perhaps inevitably, that sustained forward position would eventually invite a backwards-looking tribute, and this record by Jennifer Hall is just that.

"A West Coast Tribute to Gerry Mulligan" is just what it says. Excepting "Bernie's Tune," Mulligan wrote or co-wrote all the numbers on this album. Important as Mulligan proved to be for future bari players, his music remains absolutely foundational for "West Coast Jazz." Hall's aim is to recognize that legacy, but also to build on the foundation. To that end, she varies the horn line-up track by track, testing and even fooling with different textures and sonorities. I say "fooling with" because there is nothing sterile or overly reverent about this tribute. These musicians sound like