

Roxy Coss *Chasing The Unicorn*

POSI-TONE
★★★★

One of the first sounds on *Chasing The Unicorn* is a unique, ephemeral idea in its own right—a soprano saxophone tone that is supple and bright, well-rounded but buoyant. Roxy Coss' soprano opens the title track, and the result is an engaging, playful medium-tempo tune that ends with a solo full of grit and bite.

Coss mixes original tunes with a handful of jazz and pop covers. The two pop tunes—Willie Nelson's "Crazy" and The Beatles' "Oh! Darling"—stand out for the careful arrangements that make them sound part of the jazz idiom. "Darling" is transformed from a lovesick ballad into a bluesy lament anchored by drummer Jimmy Macbride, while in Coss' hands, "Crazy" somehow feels more heartbreaking and lonesome than the original.

Throughout the disc, Coss proves her versatility on a range of instruments, and though she leans toward tenor, conjuring up a forceful reedy bark from the saxophone, she is equally adept at soprano and bass clarinet. *Chasing The Unicorn* also showcases her original compositions, like the pleasingly disorienting "Never Enough," which mixes musical sophistication and know-how with an inherent listenability.

—Jon Ross

Chasing The Unicorn: Chasing The Unicorn; A Shade Of Jade; You're There; Free To Be; Oh! Darling; Never Enough; Virgo; Unwavering Optimism; Benny's Tune; Endless Cycle; Crazy. (56:53)
Personnel: Roxy Coss, saxophones, bass clarinet; Alex Wintz, guitar; Glenn Zaleski, piano; Rick Rosato, bass; Jimmy Macbride, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com



Yamaki/Laswell/ Douglas *The Drawing Center*

M.O.D. TECHNOLOGIES
★★★★½

This single 46-minute piece "The Science Of Imaginary Solutions" was recorded live at The Drawing Center, a small gallery in New York's SoHo district, in August 2016. It centers around drummer Hideo Yamaki, who has been collaborating with bassist Bill Laswell since the 1980s. Trumpeter Dave Douglas was subsequently added to the duo lineup as a guest, but there is no hierarchy of time in this resourceful improvisation. Following a brief exploratory wander, Laswell is already formulating a shimmering bass line. Yamaki keeps gentle time on hi-hat-with-bells, and Douglas awakens into a fanfare solo. The trumpeter seems especially suited for this kind of effects-aided soundscape, fresh from his adventures as the leader of the jazz/EDM outfit High Risk. Here, he sports a refracted tone that's reminiscent of Randy Brecker's sound on "The Purple Lagoon," that late-1970s Frank Zappa chestnut from *Zappa In New York*.

Around halfway, the palate is cleansed, Douglas emitting smears and blurts, at first sharply, then answered by his own effects, like an electro-acoustic Don Cherry. Laswell takes a solo as Yamaki whistles softly in the background. To conclude this invigorating piece, the threesome regains the calm of their opening moments.

—Martin Longley

The Drawing Center: The Science Of Imaginary Solutions. (45:47)
Personnel: Hideo Yamaki, drums; Bill Laswell, bass; Dave Douglas, trumpet, effects.
Ordering info: mod-technologies.com



Julia Hülsmann Trio *Sooner And Later*

ECM 2547
★★★★

Sooner And Later dwells in many places where pianist Julia Hülsmann and bassist Marc Muellbauer lead and follow each other. Along with drummer Heinrich Köbberling (who emerges with pronounced force on his upbeat, tuneful "You & You"), Hülsmann and Muellbauer contribute original compositions, including one inspired a melody written by 12-year-old Kyrgyzstani violinist Rysbay Abdykadyrow (the reharmonized, solemn "Biz Joluktuk") and another by Radiohead (a gentle, somber "All I Need").

The album, Hülsmann's sixth for ECM, tacks toward visitations that come and go in unconventional ways. The writing serves the purposes of melody most often, with improvising subtle and understated. Muellbauer's "The Poet (For Ali)" begins modestly, only to build in intensity with the album's strongest rhythmic pulse.

One of the album's liveliest numbers comes with Hülsmann's bouncy, slightly funky "J.J." The song's theme conveys the band's playful sides, the tune ultimately rolling into the album's most delicious song.

—John Ephland

Sooner And Later: From Afar; Thatpujai; You & You; Biz Joluktuk; All I Need; The Poet (For Ali); Offen; J.J.; Soon; Later; Der Mond. (49:27)
Personnel: Julia Hülsmann, piano; Marc Muellbauer, bass; Heinrich Köbberling, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Noah Haidu *Infinite Distances*

CELLAR LIVE 080216
★★★★½

Drive and depth inform this meaty album by Noah Haidu, the assertive pianist and innovative composer leading its 11 sizzling tracks.

Inspired by a conversation with Branford Marsalis about Rainer Maria Rilke, Haidu wrote 10 of these

tunes, six of which form a suite based on the German poet's provocative dictum: "Among the closest people there remain infinite distances."

"The Subversive" sets the tone—rarely has bristling playing been so alluring—that carries through the recording. Haidu regularly surprises, making his Cellar Live debut after two Posi-Tone recordings an unexpected delight. The title track, launched by an ascending, minor-key Haidu figure, blossoms into romantic melody, unison saxophones ushering in a ruminative Haidu solo and alto saxophonist Sharel Cassity's fierce skirl. Trumpeter Jeremy Pelt contributes bright solos to the appropriately brisk "Momentum," the leisurely waltz, "Hanaya," and the witty "They Who?" That last could have come from the Horace Silver songbook.

The album closes with a warm interpretation of "Serenity." Irabagon's dainty, and later propulsive, soprano saxophone and a Haidu solo give the Joe Henderson tune unusual elasticity.

—Carlo Wolff

Infinite Distances: The Subversive; Infinite Distances; Against The Sky; Hanaya; This Great Darkness; Can We Talk; Guardian Of Solitude; Momentum; They Who?; Juicy; Serenity. (69:52)
Personnel: Noah Haidu, piano; Sharel Cassity, alto saxophone; John Davis (4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11), Mark Ferber (1, 2, 3, 7), drums; Peter Brendler (1, 2, 3, 7), Alejandro de la Portilla, (4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11), bass; Jon Irabagon soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet, flugelhorn.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com

