



True North
Leslie Pintchik (Pintch Hard)
 by Ken Dryden

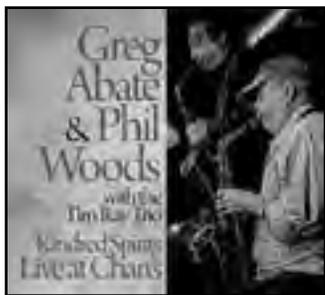
Leslie Pintchik got a late start in her performing career, as she was already well on her way to becoming an English professor. But Pintchik's switch to playing jazz piano has given her a different form of tenure, with critical praise and a growing audience.

There are familiar faces joining her for *True North*, starting with bassist and husband Scott Hardy, who collaborated on the arrangements and penned the horn orchestrations. Saxophonist Steve Wilson and percussionist Satoshi Takeishi contributed to her superb sophomore release *Quartets* while trumpeter Ron Horton and drummer Michael Sarin were on her most recent CD *In the Nature of Things*. This sextet's chemistry comes not only from previously working with Pintchik but their intuitive support of one another.

The pianist penned several originals, opening with the enticing samba "Let's Get Lucky", a lively trading of fours between Wilson (on alto) and Horton to wrap the piece. The angular "Just Sayin'" toys with listeners as to its intended route. Jaunty blues "Crooked As a Dog's Hind Leg", with Ornette Coleman, Marian McPartland and Barry Harris as likely influences, sounds like a perfect set closer for an enthusiastic audience. Pintchik's title track is a smoldering samba showcasing Wilson's matchless soprano sax, in addition to passionate choruses by Hardy and Pintchik.

The well-known compositions are played at an equally high level. Pintchik's thoughtful reharmonization of John Lennon's "Imagine" gives it an even more wistful air with the spare contributions of Sarin and Takeishi, along with a lyrical bassline, adding to its luster. Pintchik's arrangement of Henry Mancini's "Charade" is both introspective and a bit breezy, punctuated by strong rhythm section work. Closing standard "For All We Know", in trio with Hardy and Sarin, comes from a live set at Boston's Scullers. It avoids the often deliberate, sentimental route, opting for an intimate yet swinging approach.

For more information, visit lesliepintchik.com. This project is at Jazz at Kitano May 13th. See Calendar.



Kindred Spirits (Live at Chan's)
Greg Abate/Phil Woods (Whaling City Sound)
 by Scott Yanow

Phil Woods passed away on Sep. 29th, 2015, 25 days after his last public performance. Following his final concert, Woods announced his retirement and cancelled his upcoming engagements, including his appearance at a release party for *Kindred Spirits (Live at Chan's)*.

Recorded a year earlier on Aug. 11th, 2014, this two-CD set teams Woods with Greg Abate, a superior saxophonist based in New England. While Abate has recorded on several saxophones in his career, his alto playing has generally been most memorable and

personal. He sticks to alto here other than a soprano feature on "Willow Weep For Me" and manages to hold his own with the 82-year old Woods.

From the beginning of opener "Steeplechase", it is obvious this is a good-humored blowing session filled with hot bop. Abate plays in a similar style to Woods and the two consistently challenge each other. Their ensembles are often explosive, there are plenty of fiery tradeoffs, the many song quotes are humorous and the solos are filled with inventive ideas and surprises.

The first disc has six lengthy performances including a surprising uptempo version of "A Sleepin' Bee", which works quite well, and an Abate feature on "Angel Eyes". There is a second briefer version of the "I Got Rhythm"-based "Steeplechase" and four spoken introductions (mostly by a raspy-sounding Woods) programmed at the end of the disc. The second CD has five songs plus a second, more concise version of "Moonlight In Vermont" and one spoken interlude. The rhythm section of Tim Ray (piano), John Lockwood (bass) and Mark Walker (drums), showcased on "Speak Low", is tight, supportive and swinging. Ray takes many solos in the tradition and sometimes builds on the ideas and wit of the leaders. As for Woods, who first began appearing on records 60 years earlier, there is no audible decline in his playing. He was clearly inspired by the freewheeling setting and often sounds exuberant. The combination of Woods, Abate and the rhythm section results in bebop magic.

For more information, visit whalingcitysound.com. A Phil Woods tribute with Bill Goodwin, Steve Gilmore, Don Friedman and Grace Kelly is at Jazz at Kitano May 6th-7th. See Calendar.



Live at Rosy's
Sarah Vaughan (Resonance)
 by Stuart Broomer

Sarah Vaughan belongs on the Mount Rushmore of jazz singers (hardly Olympus, it would be far too inclusive, though she has recently been honored with a US Postal Service stamp). She was a genuine musician, combining a rich palette of timbres, harmonic knowledge of a good pianist and original approach to her repertoire. Her improvising skills could be applied equally to the fastest or slowest tempo and her emotional range was as broad as the three-and-a-half-octaves of her voice. It's all apparent in this two-CD set recorded live in 1978 at Rosy's Jazz Club in New Orleans. Originally recorded for the NPR series *Jazz Alive!* (emcee Billy Taylor calls her "a national treasure"), it includes two complete sets with Vaughan's longstanding trio of pianist Carl Schroeder, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Jimmy Cobb.

The sets have a continuous flow, as Vaughan moves from playful uptempo bop to casual banter to ballads suffused with aria-like depths, low notes delivered with the force of a tenor saxophone and highs with the delicacy of a flute. "I Remember April" and "Somebody Loves Me" are taken at ferocious tempos, Vaughan's scat skittering and ricocheting off the band's hand-in-glove accompaniment. Her diction can shift in a line from precise to slurred, everything given over to the momentary musical impulse, stretching at one point to a sudden baroque interpolation on "Fascinating Rhythm". On "My Funny Valentine" she repeats lyric fragments (e.g., "When You Open It"), shifting sound and inflection with each iteration. Her exchanges with Schroeder on "The Man I

Love" are as subtle as the pianist's and her ascending runs have the surprise of a great improviser. Her empathy with individual members of the band is especially apparent on "East of the Sun", sung with just bass as accompaniment.

As great as all that is, it is the ballads that are most memorable, large canvases for emotional, even spiritual drama. "Send in the Clowns" is the heart of the first set, a song of transformation with a searching, unaccompanied passage. Bernard Ingher's "Everything Must Change" has comparable intensity, Vaughan alternating vocal sunshine and storms.

For more information, visit resonancerecords.org

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