



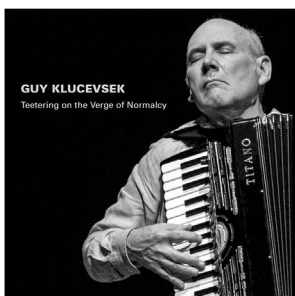
Day Breaks
Norah Jones (Blue Note)
by Andrew Véléz

Nine of the songs on *Day Breaks* are penned by the nine-time Grammy-winning songstress Norah Jones, several co-written with either Sarah Oda or Pete Dinklage. Jones is surrounded by first-rank jazz players with whom she weaves her unique blend of country, folk, rock, soul, jazz and gospel.

The opener is "Burn", on which the undulating beat of John Patitucci's acoustic bass and Jones' straightforward piano are soon joined by the gentle eloquence of Wayne Shorter's soprano saxophone. The melancholy lyrics are rendered in a hushed voice reminiscent of Nina Simone, whom Jones has acknowledged as one of her influences. For contrast there is "Flipside", a rocking and shouting declaration of independence. Dr. Lonnie Smith's Hammond B3 organ provides some haunting backup, with Jones and drummer Brian Blade building the beat to a powerhouse climax. Another beauty is "And Then There Was You"; Chris Thomas' acoustic bass and Kate Kresk and Max Moston on shimmering violins, together with Jones' ever-so-gentle vocalizing, make for an eloquent statement of love tossed away.

A treat from the '70s is Neil Young's "Don't Be Denied" on which Jones adds electric guitar and Peter Ericson Stakee, Sara Oda, Sasha Dobson and Catherine Popper form a soaring chorus. While on much of this set Jones sings softly, here she demonstrates a rousing anthem-like sound. And then she can also be just plain fun when she knocks out "Once I Had a Laugh" in a hand-on-hip honkytonk style. This set closes with the Ellington gem "Fleurette Africaine", Jones humming along with her piano and the wail of Shorter's soprano saxophone, together cooking some simmering blues.

For more information, visit bluenote.com. This project is at Beacon Theatre Nov. 29th. See Calendar.



Teetering on the Verge of Normalcy
Guy Klucevsek (Starkland)
by Kurt Gottschalk

It was an unexpected confluence of good fortune that resulted in Guy Klucevsek's new CD of solo and small group compositions being set for release on Sep. 30th, the day before an already scheduled concert at Spectrum and all the more so that some of the musicians on the disc were available once the decision was made to change the program and perform the CD in full.

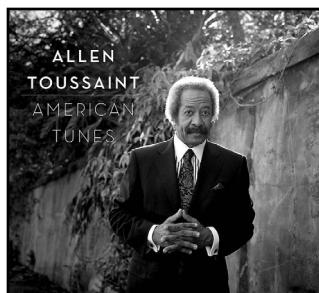
The concert was then, like the CD (of course), an eclectic mix of upbeat tunes and more formal compositions with a fair number of dedications in the mix, including pieces for William Duckworth, Nino Rota, Kurt Weill and a couple of kindred instrumentalists: accordion player Lars Hollmer and bandoneon player Astor Piazzolla.

The playlist, however, was shuffled for the live

performance. Klucevsek opened with a pair of melancholy accordion solos before introducing the exceptional Todd Reynolds for a bit of a polka and a mournful lament for accordion and violin, followed by "Hymnopedie No. 2", dedicated to Erik Satie and one of the high points of the night. Pianist Phillip Bush played a couple of solo pieces—including the knotty "Haywire Rag (A Waltz)" which, written in 5/4 time, is neither quite rag nor waltz—and then a duet with Klucevsek before the first ensemble piece, the hauntingly beautiful "Fallen Shadows" (a song about a home for retired opera singers), delivered beautifully by Bush, Reynolds and soprano Kamala Sankaram. The concert ended with something not on the CD, a striking composition Klucevsek wrote in 1999 for a theater piece about Pennsylvania coal workers, providing an opportunity for all four to play.

The accordion is an instrument capable of expressing great emotion and Klucevsek doesn't shy away from sentimentality. On the CD, he places glee and lament alongside one another in "Bob Flath Waltzes With the Angels" and then angles straight into the circus parade of "Little Big Top". But much of the time the mood is somber, the upbeat moments laced with reminiscence. With a career spanning 45 years, Klucevsek has seen artists and patrons come and leave just as public tastes have swayed in the breeze. In looking back, however, he has crafted a collection of tunes that feel timeless.

For more information, visit starkland.com



American Tunes
Allen Toussaint (Nonesuch)
by Anders Griffen

American Tunes by Allen Toussaint, who died one year ago on Nov. 10th, was released posthumously this past June. Solo piano was recorded at Toussaint's home in 2013 and group sessions in Los Angeles in October 2015, just a month before his death. Most of his career was focused on R&B, but this and 2009's *The Bright Mississippi* (also produced by Joe Henry), focuses on jazz, but with very personal and reflective interpretations of classic material. This album sounds distinctly American and very much from New Orleans.

Professor Longhair's influence is often present here. A suite of modulations are inserted into his classic "Mardi Gras in New Orleans"; it is reharmonized and given a reflective, sentimental treatment. "Hey Little Girl", a similar tune also attributed to 'Fess, is played a bit more straight, if slowed down, while inserted into a short "Big Chief" are interludes that even take on a baroque flavor. The connection between ragtime and rock 'n' roll piano is perceptible on Fats Waller's "Viper's Drag", and even with the brushes there's a punch to it. Charles Lloyd (tenor saxophone) and Bill Frisell (guitar) lend a dreamy and wistful air to "Lotus Blossom". Those qualities are normally attributed to "Southern Nights" (the title track of arguably the best album under Toussaint's own name), which is actually more driving in this solo piano rendition. Besides the piano melody, "Waltz for Debby" is nothing like Bill Evans' original, a kind of pop instrumental here. Strings arranged by Van Dyke Parks accompany the romantic "Danza". Rhiannon Giddens' spectacular vocals integrate the classic singers while showcasing singular expression on Duke Ellington's "Come Sunday" and the 12/8 blues of "Rocks in My Bed".

Paul Simon's "American Tune" is the only song Toussaint sings and would seem out of place next to the rest of the set, but the two had collaborated before and were supposed to perform together at a December 2015 concert celebration for the 30th anniversary of New Orleans Artists Against Hunger and Homelessness, an organization that was co-founded by Toussaint.

While this set is made up of classic American tunes, this music has never been heard like this. Everything is rearranged and reimagined—nostalgic and sometimes pensive, other times jubilant.

For more information, visit nonesuch.com

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