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T.K. Blue
A Warm Embrace

BLUJAZZ 3409
★★★★½

T.K. Blue's flute, which is all over his soothing new album, *A Warm Embrace*, leaves its deepest impressions when it is bouncing off just one other idea. When it's having a conversation instead of fighting for space. "A Quiet Place," arranged for just Blue and James Weidman's supportive acoustic piano, gives a clear picture of the leader's flute playing: thick, breathy, smart and strong.

Blue's original "Once Loved" presents another unobstructed view. Working with just a bassist and

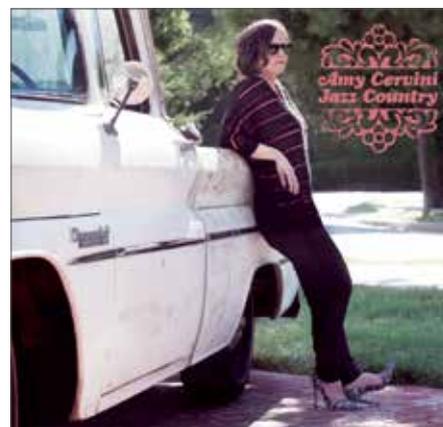
full-bodied string quartet, his peaceful flute hovers animatedly above the dramatic harmonies provided by Paul Beaudry's low notes and Quartette Indigo's two violins, cello and viola. And the first 30 seconds or so of "The Essence Of U" find Blue's honest, emotive flute in the company of just Ron Jackson's placid electric guitar arpeggios. When it's just Blue's flute and a second entity, one can really get a sense of what Blue can do on the instrument.

Inside of a group—in this case, Weidman, bassist Essiet Essiet, drummer Winard Harper, percussionist Roland Guerrero and either Jackson or Russell Malone on guitar—Blue's saxophone playing is easier to read. On the title track, he takes an unmistakably joyful solo. On Randy Weston's "Portrait Of Patsy J," he is cool and swinging. And though it's a drop too smooth, his sax on a cover of r&b star Brian McKnight's "Never Felt This Way" is firm and confident. Nothing edgy happens on *A Warm Embrace*—it's merely a collection of well-executed jazz performances—but as the title implies, that's not the point. The album is serene and pleasant and full of love. It's worth your time. —Brad Farberman

A Warm Embrace: A Warm Embrace; Tides Of Romance; Eu Sei Que Vou Te Amar; Never Felt This Way; Requiem For A Loved 1; The Essence Of U; Once Loved; Portrait Of Patsy J; Dance Of Passion; A Quiet Place; Goodbye Is Not 4-Ever; When Sunny Gets Blue; Dance Of Love Never-Ending. (63:11)

Personnel: T.K. Blue, alto, soprano saxophones, flute, alto flute; James Weidman, piano; Essiet Essiet, acoustic, electric bass; Winard Harper, drums; Ron Jackson, Russell Malone (2, 5), guitar; Roland Guerrero, percussion; Alana Adderley, vocals (12); Paul Beaudry, acoustic bass (7); Akua Dixon, cello (1, 7); Ina Paris, viola (7); Chala Yancy, 1st violin (7); Patrisa Tomassini, 2nd violin (7).

Ordering info: blujazz.com



Amy Cervini
Jazz Country

ANZIC 0044
★★★★

A Toronto native living in New York for the past 13 years, Cervini can sing most any song and tell a story worth hearing. While she has a jazz sensibility and prefers the company of jazz musicians, she goes her own way without being bound to any specific stylistic classification. On three previous albums, Cervini has comfortably interpreted songs by non-jazzers—among them, Fiona Apple, Jonatha Brooke and Leonard Cohen—as well as jazz standards and items by Blossom Dearie and Fred Hersch.

This time, the New England Conservatory-trained vocalist goes after the story in the heart of songs from country (hence the album title), folk, pop, rock, jazz, chanson and film (*Bagdad Café's* "Calling You"). The pure tone and crystalline expressiveness of her alto—along with sure phrasing—do the trick. Cervini grants genuineness to the title of Hank Williams' "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," with Marty Ehrlich's sax solo adding tart agreement, and she provides an appropriate dreamy quietude to Bostonian jazz singer Dominique Eade's love song "Go Gently To The Water." Singing "Song For The Mira" (a scenic river in Nova Scotia), she shows a mastery of Canadian folk. For fun, Cervini offers the Nat "King" Cole food-frolic "Frim Fram Sauce" and her own eccentric tune "Je Danse Avec La Neige," both sporting Anat Cohen's vertiginous clarinet.

Capably supported by guitarist Jesse Lewis, bassist Matt Aronoff and no-drums producer Matt Wilson, Cervini achieves freshness through her soothing narrative approach. Some listeners, though, will be turned off by a disproportionate amount of loveliness to energy. Just one miscue: Nadjé Noordhuis's tippy trumpet is distracting to the sense of loss the singer evokes in Johnny Cash's "I Still Miss Someone." —Frank-John Hadley

Jazz Country: Blue Moon; Wallflower Lonely; Cornflower Blue; Song For The Mira; Frim Fram Sauce; I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry; Calling You; Go Gently To The Water; Penguin Dance; Smile; Je Danse Avec La Neige (I Dance With The Snow); After The Gold Rush; I Still Miss Someone; Before He Cheats; Drivin' Cryin' Missin' You. (55:50)

Personnel: Amy Cervini, vocals, saxophone (2); Jesse Lewis, guitar, vocals (6); Matt Aronoff, double bass; Anat Cohen, clarinet (4, 10); Marty Ehrlich, saxophone (5); Oded Lev-Ari, piano (7, 8); Nellie McKay, vocals, ukulele (2); Nadjé Noordhuis, trumpet (12); Gary Versace, accordion (8).

Ordering info: anzicrecords.com

Scott Feiner & Pandeiro Jazz
A View From Below

SELF-RELEASE
★★★★

At gig load-outs, Scott Feiner's got it easy. On the bandstand, the percussionist musters all the band-driving rhythmic propulsion he needs from his lone 10-inch-diameter *pandeiro*, the Brazilian frame-drum cousin of the tambourine.

Formerly a New York jazz guitarist, Feiner discovered the diminutive drum in 1999 and dramatically switched career directions. His passionate musical rebirth inspired him to relocate to Rio de Janeiro, where he could learn from the source.

While other percussionists—most notably Airto Moreira—have applied *pandeiro* to jazz settings, Feiner has sought to establish his instrument in a principal role while tapping into multiple contemporary grooves. With *View*—his fourth and most adventurous disc—the percussionist-composer's goals are thoroughly realized.

Traditional Brazilian grooves, such as *baião* and *ijexá*, are still part of the mix, but this outing leans more heavily on a fluent, blended vocabulary of contemporary jazz, funk, r&b, rock and salsa. In a further departure from previous discs, Feiner exclusively features his own engaging, melodic originals and his group has been reduced to a stripped-down, bass-less trio.

Feiner approaches his *pandeiro* like a drum kit, driving the trio with precise, yet fluid, funky



grooves that could wow the hippest of stickmen. Keyboardist Rafael Vernet embraces the vintage sounds of Fender Rhodes and Wurlitzer electric pianos, painting engaging harmonies, infectious comps and grooving left-hand bass lines. Electric guitarist Guilherme Monteiro phrases effortlessly with Vernet on ensemble sections, then takes flight on overdriven solo passages that are bold yet judicious. His dramatic chordal splashes complement Vernet's rich harmonies, deftly avoiding redundant layers. Above all, the trio is about rhythm—a tightly locked momentum compelled by one tiny, yet mighty, drum. —Jeff Potter

A View From Below: A View From Below; Raizes; O Forno; Mother Nature; Sienna; Raro Momento; Fonte; Jasmine; The Visitor. (49:08)

Personnel: Scott Feiner, pandeiro; Guilherme Monteiro, guitar; Rafael Vernet, Fender Rhodes, Wurlitzer.

Ordering info: scottfeiner.com