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 **ROBERT WYATT**

TUESDAY, JULY 05, 2011

## Oliver Lake with Christian Weber and Dieter Ulrich – For a Little Dancin’ (Intakt, 2010)



Alto saxophonist Oliver Lake has been getting some much deserved recognition of late, performing with Orrin Evans' far-reaching Tarbaby ensemble at recent jazz festivals, recording albums for his own Passin' Thru label and cutting this lean and exciting trio set in the company of Christian Weber on bass and Dieter Ulrich on drums. The music recalls Lake's work with the collective group Trio3 that also features Andrew Cryille and Reggie Workman, with strong and free rhythm work setting the stage and interacting fully with Lake's tart alto saxophone. They delve into a little bit of everything on this set, which keeps the music consistently interesting, whether it is the brief free-jazz blowout of "Spots", where the wild and wholly collective improvisation recalls the heady days of the Loft Jazz scene where Lake first made his mark, to the abstract "Rollin' Vamp" which builds and improvises around the fulcrum of a repeated section. The title track "A Little Dancin'" even brings a little R&B into the mix, with a generous beat and some strenuous saxophone playing. The was a very well performed and varied set, Lake sounds deeply inspired by the music and solos with aplomb while Weber and Ulrich are ideal partners. Definitely an album to check out for open-eared jazz fans. [For a Little Dancin' - amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

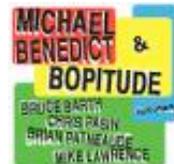
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Posted by Tim Niland at 10:03 AM 

Labels: [Christian Weber](#) , [Dieter Ulrich](#) , [free jazz](#) , [jazz](#) , [Oliver Lake](#)

MONDAY, JULY 04, 2011

## Michael Benedict and Bopitude (Planet Arts, 2011)



Taking some of the best jazz compositions of the mid 1950's to mid 1960s hard bop movement and placing them into a more modern context, drummer Michael Benedict leads an exciting band called Bopitude which consists of Bruce Barth on piano, Chris Pasin on trumpet, Brian Patneau on saxophones and Mike Lawrence on bass. There is a nice mix of bebop and hard bop including classy versions of Blue Note era classics like the Dexter Gordon favorite 'Cheesecake', a nice feature for Patneau's steely tenor saxophone, "Heckle and Jeckle" and "Frankenstein" which grew out of the fruitful collaboration between saxophonist Jackie McLean and trombonist Grachan Moncour III. The

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hard bop anthem “Moanin” that Bobby Timmons composed for Art Blakey’s Jaz Messengers is featured with the band’s signature style: strong well played melody statements that spin into well thought out and logical improvisational segments before returning to the main melody. Solos are quite good and always in support of the song, and the ensemble playing is ego-less. Clifford Brown’s “Joy Spring” has a very potent solo from Chris Pasin, and pianist Barth contributes wonderful work throughout the project. Benedict makes no bones in the liner notes about the fact that hard bop is his favorite type of jazz and that passion and love fires a very well done album. Far from being a historical project, Bopitude proves that this music is just as valid today as when it was conceived. [Michael Benedict and Bopitude - amazon.com](#)

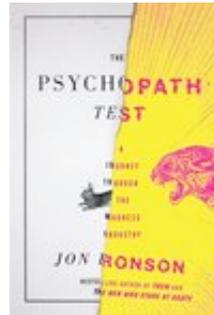
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Posted by Tim Niland at [8:32 PM](#) 

Labels: [Brian Patneau](#) , [hard-bop](#) , [jazz](#) , [Michael Benedict](#)

SUNDAY, JULY 03, 2011

## **Books: The Psychopath Test by Jon Ronson**



[The Psychopath Test: A Journey Through the](#)  
[Madness Industry](#) by [Jon Ronson](#)

My rating: [4 of 5 stars](#)

It starts with a mysterious hand-crafted book being mailed to various academics around the world. Journalist Jon Ronson is contacted by one of the receivers and asked to play amateur sleuth in finding out who sent the books and why. When he discovers the answer, it raises more questions than answers. What is mental illness? Who is genuinely dangerous and who is being used by the drug companies, pharmaceutical industry and law enforcement for the lack of any better planning. Ronson learns of the plight of “Tony,” convicted of assault, only to plead insanity and find himself in a mental institution long after any criminal conviction would have run out. This leads the author to see out Ron Hare, author of The Psychopath Test, a checklist to be used by psychiatrists and law enforcement to determine who may or may not be a threat to society. Along the way Ronson documents the failures and successes of the test’s findings, veering off into the world of conspiracy theory and the development of the field of psychiatry. This was a well written and enjoyable book, certainly thought provoking in its research and conclusions (many people with psychopathic characteristics may reside at the highest levels of corporate and government service.) Ronson mixes the tongue in cheek with the truly serious and builds a convincing book that should be of interest to anyone interested in the workings of the human mind. [The Psychopath Test - amazon.com](#)

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Posted by Tim Niland at [9:36 AM](#) 

Labels: [books](#)

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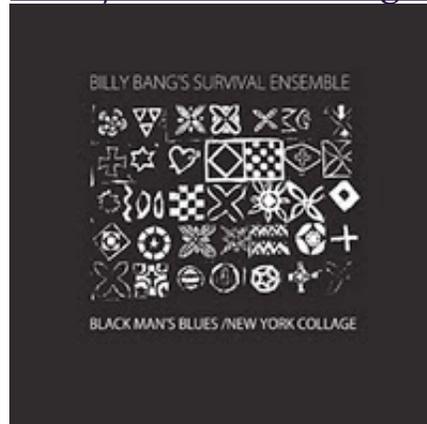
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SATURDAY, JULY 02, 2011

## Billy Bang's Survival Ensemble - Black Man's Blues/New York Collage (NoBusiness, 2011)



Violinist [Billy Bang](#) had been through a lot by the time he was ready to record his first LP as a leader, included as part of this extraordinary two-disc collection of his early work. Bang had survived a harrowing tour of duty in Vietnam, an influx of competing musicians from the Midwest, and the economic hardships that creative musicians in New York City always face. The music itself however, is raw and fascinating. The lengthy liner essay by Ed Hazel documents the scene in great detail,

citing the influence of Black Nationalism and particularly the writings of Malcolm X as a driving force behind the group's mission. The Survival Ensemble consisted of: Billy Bang on violin, Bilal Abdur Rahman on tenor and soprano saxophones, Henry Warner on alto saxophone, William Parker on bass, Khuwana Fuller on congas and Rashid Bakr on drums. In addition, musicians would recite poetry and play percussion instruments as well. The first disc, entitled *Black Man's Blues* was recorded in 1977 at an anti-apartheid fund raiser, consists of two lengthy medleys, "Albert Ayler/Know Your Enemy" and "Ganges/Enchantment/Tapestry" along with Rahman's strong "Black Man's Blues." Incorporating spoken word extolling the life and music of [Albert Ayler](#), the first medley builds to a wonderfully deep and raw exploration of improvised music. The half-hour long middle medley written by William Parker, allows the bands dynamism to come to the forefront, developing open sections of bass and percussion with full band improvisation. "Black Man's Blues" includes some incendiary poetry before the equally powerful music that follows. Disc two was Bang's first proper album, [New York Collage](#), originally released on the small Anima label in 1978. Recorded at the studios of WKCR, the music is even tighter and more polished than the previous disc. Dedicate to John Coltrane, Bang's "Nobody Hear Music the Same Way" is a wonderful exploration of the late period Coltrane aesthetic, as is the deeply moving "For Josie, Part II." Mixing poetry and music is "Illustration" which develops a patchwork of words and music into a coherent whole. Rahman's "Subhanallah" wraps up the album with a strong and potent improvisation. This was a very well done release with the re-mastered music sounding crisp and clear and the extensive liner notes and photography putting everything in context. This is a model historical jazz release and serves as a potent reminder not just of the potency of Billy Bang's music but a missing link to the music of the Loft Jazz Era. [Black Man's Blues/New York Collage - NoBusiness Records.](#)

Send comments to [Tim](#).

Posted by Tim Niland at 1:00 PM

Labels: [Billy Bang](#) , [free jazz](#) , [jazz](#) , [William Parker](#)  
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FRIDAY, JULY 01, 2011

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## [Aram Bajakian's Kef \(Tzadik, 2011\)](#)



By listening to this album, you can tell why rock 'n' roll legend [Lou Reed](#) would ask guitarist [Aram Bajakian](#) to play guitar on his summer tour. Bajakian can rip feedback laden Velvet Underground/Robert Quine style riffs at will, but can also play gentler music in acoustic and electric format. This album (which will be released on July 26) features Bajakian in the company of Shanir Ezra Blumenkranz on acoustic bass, electric bass, oud and gimbri and Tom Swafford on violin. There is a

great deal of variety on this album for a trio project, ranging from the haunting ballads "48 Days" and "Pear Tree" where subtlety is the key and the music draws on several influences from world music to classical as well as jazz. The fusion side of the group comes out nicely on "Sepastia" with its blasting electric guitar and sawing violin recalling the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and "Raki" which features killing snarling electric guitar shredding around riffing violin in a frenetic dance. "Karasalama" brings everything together, starting with spare and atmospheric guitar and violin and then building to a faster pace before dynamically stepping down for the conclusion. The music on this album draws its inspiration from a wide variety of music from all over the world, and the three musicians form a tight and cohesive unit, that plays consistently enjoyable music. [Aram Bajakian's Kef - amazon.com](#)

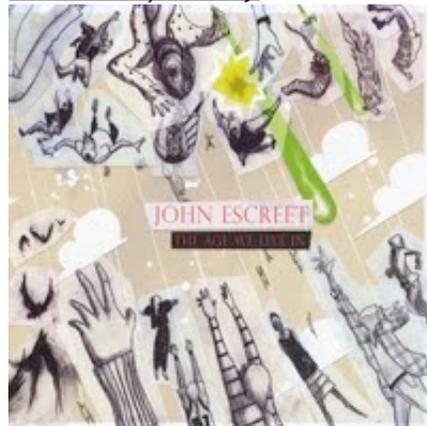
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Posted by Tim Niland at 9:33 AM

Labels: [Aram Bajakian](#) , [fusion](#) , [jazz](#) , [world music](#)

THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 2011

## [John Escreet – The Age We Live in \(Mythology Records, 2011\)](#)



With each new release, keyboardist and composer [John Escreet](#) has become more adventurous in his outlook toward music. This is his most diverse album yet, hinting at modern fusion while remaining true to his post-bop roots. Performing with him is a stellar lineup including David Binney on alto saxophone and electronics, Wayne Krantz on guitar, Marcus Gilmore on drums, plus a few special guests. After a brief introductory statement, electronics and electric piano begin "The Domino

Effect" which builds with the help of a scalding guitar solo, and an interesting section of saxophone and electronics. Funk is an element of a few of the compositions on this album, namely "Half Baked," "Kickback" and "Stand Clear" which take the music in a fun and accessible direction,

with some strutting horn work along with nimble electric piano weaving with guitar. The epic title song "The Age We Live In" develops a mysterious feel, with extra horns riffing behind Binney's alto saxophone, then gradually adding electronics and guitar for a complex improvisation that accurately reflects the modern age. "A Day in Music" is a milder ballad featuring melodic saxophone and deeply textured electric piano. The sax solo builds patiently before handing off to guitar and building to a conclusion. Escreet's acoustic piano chops are spotlighted on the short tracks "Hidden Beauty" and "As the Moon Disappears" which set up spare and at times spooky mix of electric and acoustic music. This was a taught and enjoyable album with consistently interesting writing and performing. Blending a diverse mix of influences, the group builds a formidable statement. [The Age We Live In - amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

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Posted by Tim Niland at [11:20 AM](#) 

Labels: [David Binney](#) , [fusion](#) , [jazz](#) , [John Escreet](#)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 2011

## [Dave Douglas - GPS Vol. 1, Rare Metals \(Greenleaf, 2011\)](#)



Trumpeter, cornet player and composer Dave Douglas leads a myriad of bands that cover a lot of territory. This one, Brass Ecstasy, takes the ideas from brass bands and New Orleans bands of the past and moves the music into the present. Recorded in an informal manner, the music feels off the cuff, the sounds of musicians playing for themselves and having fun doing it. The personnel of the group is: Dave Douglas on trumpet, Vincent Chancey on French horn, Luis Bonilla on trombone,

Marcus Rojas on tuba and Nasheet Waits on drums. "Town Hall" begins with uptempo fun horns riffing behind a pungent trumpet solo. There is a smooth unaccompanied break then the band returns to the melody, speeding to a fine conclusion. Bumping tuba and slinky brass open "Night Growl" with a charming parade style strut. Tuba or French horn develop a deep throaty response. The standard "Lush Life" is taken mid-tempo with trumpet and brushes patiently developing a quietly melancholy air. Tuba underpins other horns, making for a subtle and powerful performance. "Thread" features stuttering horns building momentum. With the other horns weaving mid-tempo pace to accompany a fiery trumpet solo. "Safeway" is a ballad with brushes and the horns developing a plangent setting, slowly building rich tones, culminating in strong trumpet over support brass. Yearning trumpet in a slightly mournful format ushers in "My Old Sign." The music builds to impressive full band section before slowing back down to a mellow ending. As a label owner, Douglas has the ability to release albums like this in the digital format as he pleases. But this was not on a whim, Rare Metals, is an excellent set from Brass Ecstasy band. Nothing to prove here, musicians having fun playing jazz. [Greenleaf Portable Series, Volume 1: Rare Metals - amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

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Posted by Tim Niland at [3:11 PM](#) 

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