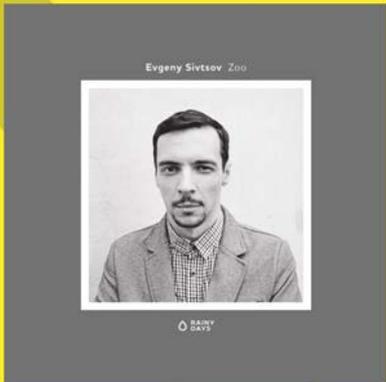


OCTOBER 11, 2019



EVGENY SIVTSOV "THE ZOO"

WITH
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Jazz / BY DENISE SULLIVAN

How to Put Across a Song

Vocals are the main event on these half dozen releases, all of them bursting with songs sung with swagger, conviction and sincerity. Whether performed in a duo formation or by a singer accompanied by an accomplished band, the material may veer from contemporary to classic, or be delivered by male and female singers from here or afar. No matter the form, a deep feeling for putting across a song is at the core of these heartfelt and occasionally surprising vocal performances.

New York-based guitarist **Benji Kaplan** and Brazilian vocalist, **Rita Figueiredo**, debut as a duo on **Benji & Rita (Big Apple Batucada, 42:38 ★★★)**, a collection of lush, iconoclastic arrangements and distinct vocals that make for a unique marriage. The team combines samba, waltz and pop arrangements by Kaplan (on guitar) with additional lyrics by Figueiredo, that are said to draw on the lyricist and singer's roots in a country known for its Amazonian jungles and hard scrabble urban landscapes and are sung in Portuguese, so who knows: The music's charm is in its dramatic delivery and its evocation of Tropicalia.

Ordering info: benjiandrita.com

Play The Bird And The Bee (Smalllive 37:01 ★★★) is **Charles Ruggiero's** and **Hilary Gardner's** homage to Blue Note electro-pop duo, Greg Kurstin and Inara George, known professionally as The Bird and the Bee. The outgrowth of one cover song by Ruggiero and Gardner (a drummer and vocalist respectively) best known for his TV themes and her standards and contemporary covers, this tribute takes flight with assists from Jeremy Manasia (piano) and Neal Miner (bass) and demonstrates the duo's pliability at turning whatever form of song they choose, inside out.

Ordering info: hilarygardner.com

The Only Light (Inner Circle Music INCM085, 49:00 ★★★) by Lithuanian singer, **Viktorija Pilatovic**, an educator at Berklee's Valencia campus, is truly international in intention and flavor. Pilatovic's vision comes through on her angular compositions and arrangements juxtaposed with a fluid and reaching vocal style. Over the course of the album she's accompanied by Alberto Palau on piano, Ales Cesarini on bass and Mariano Steimberg on drums, on 10 original songs. Hitting her strongest notes on the opener, "We Were Not Born Yesterday," both "Hungry Eyes" and "Patience," double down with sax by fellow Berklee instructor, Perico Sambeat, whose big band/horn section shines on "Confusion."

Ordering info: viktorijapilatovic.com



Rosana Eckert

TERESA JOLIE

Sailing Home (OA2 22168; 48:11 ★★★) by **Rosana Eckert** finds the Texan singer back in the studio after a nine year hiatus from recording (though she never left performance). Her fourth recorded venture, this set is a partial collaboration with Peter Eldridge (with some tunes co-composed with Eckert's husband, Gary Eckert), but it's mostly a showcase for Eckert's compositional work (she is primarily known as a vocalist). Trading piano accompaniment for guitar and bringing a warm vibe to the title song, there's a studied yet ethereal focus to "Someone Else's Life," and some fun and funk on the New Orleans-styled romp, "Coriander Stomp."

Ordering info: originarts.com

Sway (PB Music; 47:07 ★★) by **Patrick Barnitt** is a collection of moody swing, pop and standards with The Paul McDonald Big Band that covers faithful ground, from "The More I See You" and "Won't You Come Home Bill Bailey," to Chicago's classic rock jam, "Does Anyone Really Know What Time It Is?" Known for performing at Hollywood hangout the Dresden Room and from TV's Star Trek: First Contact, Barnitt invites fellow actor, Laura Pursell, to share the stage on "Quando Quando Quando" and Les McCann's soul blues, "The Truth."

Ordering info: patrickbarnitt.com

A self-described crooner, Denmark's **Toft Olsen** follows up 2018's well-received **Four** with **Special (Gateway Music; 42:28 ★★)**. Accompanied by Heine Hansen on piano, Morten Lund on drums and Thomas Vang on bass, Olsen takes on mostly romantic standards ("When I Fall In Love") and four originals, collaborations with lyricist Mark Davies, all themed on matters of the heart, sung in finely-tuned English.

Ordering info: aarhusart.com

DB