

## GLOBE UNITY



**Pu:**  
**Ville Herrala (We Jazz)**  
*El Suelo Mío*  
**Jorge Roeder (s/r)**  
*The Balloon Catcher*  
**Jošt Drašler (Sploh)**  
 by Tom Greenland

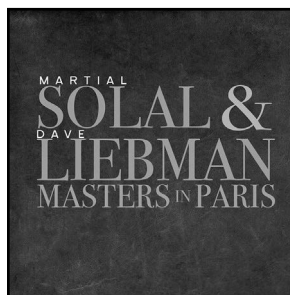
Physically difficult to play, sonically marginalized at the low end of the pitch range and often relegated to a supportive role in improvising ensembles, the acoustic bass is nevertheless a marvelously versatile instrument, fully capable (when handled by an adept) of sustaining a listener's interest all on its lonesome, as proven by three recent solo projects.

**Pu:**, Finnish bassist Ville Herrala's debut, contains 14 terse vignettes that alternately highlight pizzicato and arco techniques. The former is employed over rolling riffs ("Pu:1", "Pu:10"), minimalistic motifs ("Pu:3"), chromatic walking lines ("Pu:14") and long, slowly but relentlessly developed ideas ("Pu:7"). On "Pu:5" he uses a two-handed batting technique to churn out pentatonic lines. He uses a bow to extract colorful arrays of upper frequencies, which can whirr like a throat-singer ("Pu:2"), crackle like a campfire log ("Pu:11"), mewl like a peevish tot ("Pu:4"), groan like a mudslide ("Pu:6") or sputter like an overworked machine ("Pu:8"). On "Pu:9" he bats the bow to conjure up a forest full of crickets; on "Pu:12" he pounds the bass body itself. "Pu:13", his most varied piece, sounds something like an atonal cello suite.

Though Peruvian bassist Jorge Roeder has worked with top-shelf artists in New York for over a decade, *El Suelo Mío* is his first album. The 13 tracks combine originals and covers, all but one featuring his powerful yet graceful plucked attack, his robust ringing tone to the fore, several pieces anchored by low D and C pedal tones made possible by a string extender. On "Solo Juntos", "Bounce" and "Thing Thing" his ornamented melodic sequences, spurred by a powerful pizzicato, recall an oud player's *taksim* (improvisation). On the title track, "Chabuca Limeña", "El Plebeyo", "I'll Remember April" and "Silencio de um Minuto" he shows an orchestral command of the bass, balancing melody, counterpoint, harmony and percussion with the agility of a solo pianist or guitarist. His most expressive work is on "Patrona", "Rambler" and a cover of Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman".

Slovenian bassist Jošt Drašler's solo debut *The Balloon Catcher* is a suite of impromptu miniatures realized through diverse preparations, implements and extended techniques. "Blue Balloon" reveals—in fits and starts—a plethora of sounds: lions fighting in the night, an elephant's trumpet, a drum roll, a pinched growl, a model airplane motor. "Red Balloon" is more tentative, evoking the rappings of a haunted house, the drips of a leaky faucet, bumps in the night. Drašler is not afraid to let silences speak for him, as on "Water Balloon", "Green Balloon" or "Grandma Balloon", where the gaps and lulls invite a response. Not a melodic player in the traditional sense, he is, like Roeder, a master orchestrator, melding sounds and textures into dense, polychromatic soundscapes, best exemplified by the organized anarchy of "Yellow Balloon" and mellifluous cacophony of "Flying Balloon".

For more information, visit [wejazz.fi](http://wejazz.fi), [jorgeroeder.com](http://jorgeroeder.com) and [sploh.si](http://sploh.si)



**Masters in Paris**  
**Martial Solal/Dave Liebman (Sunnyside)**  
 by Ken Dryden

Given the wide range of stylistic interests that French pianist Martial Solal (who turns 93 this month) and American saxophonist Dave Liebman have demonstrated during their respective decades-long careers, finding middle ground was not an issue during their duo performances together in 2016. An earlier CD from an August 2016 French concert, *Masters In Bordeaux*, was issued in 2017 to critical acclaim. This new CD is a Parisian concert recorded a few months later and eclipses the previous release. While they perform familiar standards and jazz favorites, including two songs that they tackled on the previous album, there is nothing predictable about their approaches to any of these songs, with their originals being an added bonus.

Spontaneity is the key element in each song. An off-center piano vamp and bristling, gutsy tenor saxophone quickly detour from the theme of "A Night In Tunisia" while creative use of space should be required listening for young virtuosi who haven't yet learned to let their music breathe. Solal's dissonant, inventive chords introduce the theme of "Stella By Starlight", conveying a sense of playfulness, then Liebman makes his entrance on soprano to bring in a wistful air to contrast with the pianist's humorous line.

Solal previously recorded his "In and Out" with Johnny Griffin; this version with Liebman on tenor proves to be even more striking, as his improvisational flights soar above the mysterious melody. Solal's whimsical side is on full display in the rambunctious interpretation of "Night and Day", as he hints at Bud Powell with a "Parisian Thoroughfare"-like run and myriad salutes to other bop greats without making them overly obvious. Liebman (on tenor) is up to the challenge and he revels in providing an inventive contrasting line while also adding his own amusing licks. Liebman's easygoing waltz "Small One" is a terrific showcase for his soprano, with Solal's unconventional supporting lines stimulating the composer to greater heights. One can only hope that other concerts featuring these two jazz masters are waiting to be prepared for release.

For more information, visit [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)



**Imaginary Archipelago**  
**Adam Rudolph/Ralph M. Jones/Hamid Drake (Meta)**  
**Balancing Tear**  
**Mako Sica/Hamid Drake (Astral Spirits)**  
**A Tribute to Alvin Fielder (Live at Vision Festival XXIV)**  
**Kidd Jordan/Joel Futterman/**  
**William Parker/Hamid Drake (Mahakala)**  
 by Robert Iannapolo

Hamid Drake, who turns 65 this month, became familiar to creative music listeners with his recording debut on the Mandingo Griot Society album from 1978. Over 40 years later he's still going strong, one of the foremost drummers in creative improvised music.

One of his bandmates on that first release was percussionist Adam Rudolph. Since that auspicious debut, their musical partnership has been particularly

strong. Throughout the years, they've cropped up on each other's albums and albums by Yusef Lateef, Fred Anderson, Pharoah Sanders and others.

In 2017, they formed Karuna Trio with reed/flute player Ralph M. Jones and released a self-titled album to great reviews. *Imaginary Archipelago* is the followup. This volume is dedicated to Lateef and Karuna's music shares elements with his ventures into "non-idiomatic" improvisatory music. But all three players are strong individualists with their own ideas of how to approach this idiom.

*Imaginary Archipelago* consists of 11 tracks stemming from improvisations then refashioned by Rudolph through editing, electronic processing and sequencing. Rudolph is a master at this as he's shown on his own recordings. Dividing the music into sequences from 4 to 11 minutes, he doesn't overload it with effects or flashy editing. Each member details his corner of the triangle and the results are then enhanced by Rudolph's post-production. He crafts a suite that flows from beginning to end as it fades into the ether. "Alima" starts with a phrase from bass clarinet that is then looped and becomes the base for the track. Electronics are added as the piece develops, featuring subtle percussive elements. The floating group stasis of "Chandirasa" is succeeded by the vibrant percussion/saxophone-heavy "Suwakaba" but the sequencing sounds natural. (Incidentally, although there is post-processing involved, they do this sort of thing live as well.) The first Karuna album was good but *Imaginary Archipelago* ups the ante by presenting it as a more coherent whole. This is clearly the music of a unit.

Mako Sica is a band from Chicago that has been making music on the rock side of the spectrum for over a decade, with Przemyslaw Krysz Drazek (trumpet, guitar), Brent Fuscaldo (vocals, electric bass, classical guitar, harmonica, Tibetan prayer beads, lightbulb) and Chaetan Newell (piano, cello, drums, electric piano, sound effects, synthesizer, tambourine, ukelele, acoustic bass, viola). But boundaries seem immaterial to the makeup of this group. The influence of the recently departed Ennio Morricone's Western soundtracks informs the opener "Trapeze" with its lonely trumpet, twangy guitar and slowly developing pace. One can also hear the influence of Middle Eastern modes in their playing, especially on "Enchanted City". Drake has recorded and played with Mako Sica before, giving them a firm rhythmic foundation without ever overpowering the band's unique sound and approach. He knows when to give the music a groove, textural color and when not to play. All in all, a meeting between two Chicago forces bearing fruit.

The third disc featuring Drake in the drum seat is *A Tribute to Alvin Fielder*, recorded at the 24th Vision Festival in 2019. Fielder (who died in January of that year) was an original member of the AACM in '60s Chicago. By the time Drake began associating with AACM in the '70s, Fielder had moved to New Orleans where he, along with saxophonist Kidd Jordan, nurtured a nascent free jazz scene. Fielder was a revered drummer in AACM circles and Drake is the perfect drummer for this celebration. This disc presents the full festival set, the quartet completed by Jordan, pianist Joel Futterman and bassist William Parker. It's a bracing, invigorating 45 minutes, weaving in and out of various moods and rhythmic sequences. Songs are referenced including "Nature Boy" (twice) and "Motherless Child", with a digression that switches things to a swinging tempo for a few minutes. During Futterman's solo he quotes Monk's "Crepuscule with Nellie". But basically this is free blowing of the highest order from four current masters paying tribute to a former musical comrade (Jordan and Futterman) and a musical elder (Parker and Drake).

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