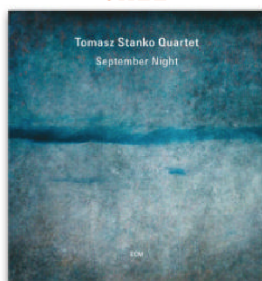


JAZZ


TOMASZ STANKO QUARTET
September Night

Stanko, trumpet; Marcin Wasilewski, piano; Slawomir Kurkiewicz, bass; Michal Miskiewicz, drums
 ECM 2650 (CD, available as LP). 2024. Manfred Eicher, prod.; Stefano Amerio, eng.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

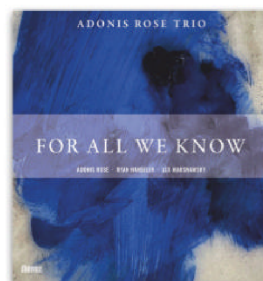
SONICS ★★★★★

Tomasz Stanko made a record for ECM in 1975, then was gone from the label for 20 years. When he returned, he began recording ECM albums that gradually identified him as one of the greatest jazz musicians not only in Poland but anywhere. His ECM discography reached 11 titles before his death at 76 in 2018. ECM has not posthumously released any previously unissued Stanko recordings, until now.

Your present correspondent has all 11 albums but had not listened to them in a while. *September Night* is a fine piece to rediscover Stanko with. When you hear the haunting, mournful, lingering trumpet calls on the first track, "Hermento's Mood," it all comes flooding back: Stanko was Svengali. He spoke the private language of the human soul. He once said, "The mood of Polish melancholy is in my blood." It made him a mesmerizing ballad player. But he knew that a jazz trumpet was also for spitting fire, as on "Euforila" and "Theatrical." Passion often turned his tone rough and guttural. Sometimes he shrieked. His lyricism was arcane, asymmetrical, startling, and absolute.

ECM never released a live Stanko album during his lifetime. (He was opposed to recording live.) *September Night* comes from a concert in Munich in 2004. It is interesting to compare the live versions of "Celina" and "Song for Sarah" (quintessential Stanko melodies, pure and stark) to their studio counterparts, from the albums *Suspended Night* and *Matka Joanna*. The live versions are longer and less finely focused, but they sound more electric, more in the moment, even more urgent. And they have more space for the profound solos of Stanko's alter ego, pianist Marcin Wasilewski.

September Night makes you wonder what other invaluable unreleased Stanko music ECM is sitting on.—**Thomas Conrad**


ADONIS ROSE TRIO + ONE
For All We Know

Rose, drums; Ryan Hanseler, piano; Lex Warshawsky, bass; Gabrielle Cavassa, vocals
 Storyville 1018535 (CD). 2024. Rose, prod.; Tim Stambaugh, eng.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

SONICS ★★★★★

When Joshua Redman's *Where Are We* came out in 2023, two things made it unique: It was Redman's Blue Note debut, and it introduced an exciting under-the-radar singer. Now Gabrielle Cavassa appears on another album, and again she steals the show.

It must be quickly noted that Adonis Rose is a fine drummer with a long resumé, and he leads a classy trio here. Pianist Ryan Hanseler and bassist Lex Warshawsky are promising young talents. Rose also deserves credit for his production. *For All We Know* is an album of standard ballads. Almost no one dares to do that anymore.

But Cavassa runs away with this session. She has one of those rare voices that pulls you inside her joy and pain. You might think that "I've Grown Accustomed to His Face" has been sung too many times. Cavassa lights it up anew. She does not so much sing it as breathe it, think it aloud, discover its conflicted emotions for herself for the first time. (Warshawsky's rapt bass solo deepens the interpretation.) It takes an artist to rephrase and improve a song already perfect, like the title track, and it takes an actress to fully occupy the longing of its lyrics: "Tomorrow was made for some, tomorrow may never come, for all we know." Cavassa's intimate encounters with other great songs, like "So Many Stars," "You Go to My Head," and "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?," also sound like personal testaments.

Some of the best-recorded jazz albums come from engineers who are not famous, working in studios off the beaten track. There is an unfortunate current trend in vocal albums to submerge the singer in the mix. Engineer Tim Stambaugh, working in Word of Mouth Studios in Louisiana, puts Cavassa where she belongs: out front. Her voice is so close and clear you can almost feel her breath on your face.—**Thomas Conrad**


AMINA FIGAROVA
Suite for Africa

Figarova, piano; 29 others
 AmFi BACD018 (CD). 2024. Figarova, prod.; Andy Taub, Mike Marciano, David Kowalski, Tazu Marshall, engs.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

SONICS ★★★★★

The 18 albums Amina Figarova has released to date have made her one of the most admired composers in jazz. She is from Azerbaijan but was based in the Netherlands for 20 years. Her bands contained European players until she moved to New York in 2010.

Her current sextet includes Americans (trumpeter Alex Pope Norris, tenor saxophonist Wayne Escoffery, drummer Rudy Royston) and a bassist originally from Tokyo (Yasushi Nakamura). The unchanging foundation of every Figarova band is herself on piano and her husband, Bart Platteau, on flutes. The airy, silvery tones of Platteau's instruments, with their darting quickness, is inseparable from the Figarova ensemble sound.

Suite for Africa is different from anything Figarova has done. It features the Matsiko World Orphan Choir, comprised of at-risk children from Liberia. On a suite in three movements, 24 voices sing lyrics written for Figarova's music by the choir's creative director, Mark Hegarty. It is a rush when the children's voices first erupt on "Part I: Spirit Africa, Spirit Liberia." "Forgotten children sing, ... singing our future, singing for freedom," they call out *en masse*.

The voices are neither sweet nor soothing. They are clamorous and jubilant. Figarova's achievement is to integrate the choir's raucous vocal humanity and powerful message into the sophisticated instrumental context of a high-level jazz sextet. Combining these two musical entities must have been a complex process. Figarova makes them sound meant for each other.

The rest of the album, without the choir, contains new compositions that are quintessential Figarova in their formal elegance and melodic grace. The most affecting is the gentle, fervent "Faith Is Her Name," dedicated to a gifted singer in the choir. It sounds like love become music.—**Thomas Conrad**