

solo is unquestionably the best through his hard-bop grab-bag. Davis is the most elegant of artists, working up to a pleasing Latin lather and unwinding seductively.

**FERRY TANNENBAUM**

## TEPFER & LEE KONITZ

*With Lee* (Sunnyside)

Pianist Dan Tepfer had played with saxophonist Lee Konitz for two years by the time this CD was recorded. The rapport that had developed between them made it easy to create spontaneous improvisations in every key. Of “Easy” is a relative word, as Tepfer writes in the liner notes, since Konitz looks for challenges, whether he’s playing standard or blowing without any preconceived direction. What is interesting about the “Elande” pieces (all titled with a key signature) is how each one takes a different approach from both players. Tepfer plays a spritely semi-classical piece in “F#,” to which his partner responds slowly with warm notes. On “E” Tepfer strikes some chords and lets them breathe if he is actually standing back to let Konitz’s ease in that challenging key.

This album has any setbacks, they’re in the length of the pieces, none of which hit three minutes, many lasting only two. The pair’s ability to contain their exuberance is admirable, but the experience is more like having appetizers for dinner: delicious but without sustenance. Halfway through they offer a full piece, Tepfer’s “Merka Tikva,” and they conclude with a 1920s standard “Trees,” but it’s hard to wonder what could have been done that would have let themselves go longer.

**ANLEY**

## HENRY THREADGILL ZOOID

*Brings Us To, Vol. 1* (Pi)

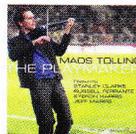
*This Brings Us To, Vol. 1* is one of Henry Threadgill’s most challenging recordings, requiring great focus. Its merits don’t always mean that, but when the altoist/flutist/composer and his Zooid quintet are on their feet, they’re really happening. Threadgill’s jazz is both free and rule-bound, with specific intervals for each musician to play within. This naturally requires a logic more than traditional melody and harmony, but there’s no way to know

that by listening: The compositions and improvisations, by and large, are as meaty and cohesive as the best-crafted standards and bebop solos. The most notable exception is the disjointed first track, “White Wednesday Off the Wall,” which gives a severe misimpression about the album to follow (and perhaps was so intended).

Though Threadgill and guitarist Liberty Ellman are most prominent, it’s Jose Davila who’s the most interesting player here. His trombone gives a shape both graceful and contorted to “To Undertake My Corners Open,” while his tuba fuses with the rhythm section (Ellman, bassist Stomu Takeishi and drummer Elliot Humberto Kavee) to form the rippling textures and free-funk grooves of “Chairmaster” and “Sap.” In the meantime Ellman spikes the tunes with a harsh, thorny sound that can be off-putting but does add angle and excitement. As for Threadgill, he’s most compelling on the disc’s first half, where he plays the flute. His alto sax is more penetrating but less enjoyable—and, on “After Some Time,” sounds completely lost. *This Brings Us To*, however, is stronger than its weakest elements. **MICHAEL J. WEST**

## MADS TOLLING

*The Playmaker* (Madsman)



Mads Tolling has an impressive resume with the Turtle Island Quartet, having earned 2006 and 2008 Grammys for *4+Four* and *A Love Supreme: The Legacy of John Coltrane*. The Copenhagen native moved to Boston to study at the Berklee College of Music, graduating in 2003. Jean-Luc Ponty recommended him to bassist Stanley Clarke, and Tolling’s switch from viola to violin in 2007 now has him splitting time between the Turtle Island Quartet, Clarke’s band and his own group.

Clarke, vibraphonist Stefon Harris, drummer Jeff Marris and Yellowjackets keyboardist Russell Ferrante appear as guests on Tolling’s sophomore effort, *The Playmaker*. But the violinist’s quartet (with guitarist Mike Abraham, bassist George Ban-Weiss and drummer Eric Garland) open the record with a creative cover of Radiohead’s “Just,” during which Tolling and Abraham alternately skirt and state the pop melody.

“The Playmaker Suite” is a trilogy dedicated to three professional athletes. The opening title track is for football

quarterback Tom Brady, with Ferrante’s piano adding flourishes to the odd-metered groove. Clarke’s bowed acoustic bass lends classical tinges to “The Contemplator,” a pensive cut for soccer great Zinedine Zidane. Harris guests on both that track and “The Risktaker,” which shifts gears between fusion and reggae to honor basketball superstar LeBron James.

Tolling also honors musical playmakers. “Starmaker Machinery,” for John McLaughlin, is a manic, Mahavishnu Orchestra-like piece on which Tolling burns like Jerry Goodman, Abraham plays with McLaughlin’s fire and Marris impersonates Billy Cobham. The Pee Wee Ellis composition “The Chicken,” a Jaco Pastorius catalog staple, is also a treat. Tolling opens the tune by playing Pastorius’ signature bassline, then Ban-Weiss takes the funky, syncopated baton from there. Even the closing cover of Led Zeppelin’s “Black Dog” works. **BILL MEREDITH**

## WAYNE WALLACE LATIN JAZZ QUINTET

*Bien Bien!* (Patois)



At the 2009 Monterey Jazz Festival, whether by serendipity or design, two of the most impressive sets came from a fairly esoteric niche in jazz—that of trombonist-led Latin-jazz groups, being Conrad Herwig’s Latin Side All-Star Band and the Bay Area-based Wayne Wallace Latin Jazz Quintet. Both groups demonstrated the ready adaptability of non-Latin jazz repertoire to the syncopated strategies of particular Latin rhythms, an idea central to Wallace’s quintet album *Bien Bien!*

Here, Wallace cleverly—but also organically—gives Latin-arrangement packaging to such jazz standards as Eddie Harris’ “Freedom Jazz Dance,” Sonny Rollins’ “Solid” and Duke Ellington’s “Going Up!,” the latter a tribute to Ellington’s trombonists of note. Whereas those arrangements have Latin identities from the ground and the grooves on up, versions of John Coltrane’s “Africa” and Ellington’s “In a Sentimental Mood” are Latin-ized mainly on the fringes, via Michael Spiro’s percussion parts.

Wallace, a fine player, musical thinker and soloist, does the trombone connection one further on this date, bringing into the fold special guest ’bone players Julian Priester and Dave Martell, who harmonize the melody on Wallace’s opening title cut.

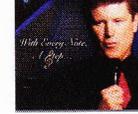
**JOSEF WOODARD**

## REVIEWS

By Christopher LO...

## SCOT ALBERTSON

*With Every Note, a S...*



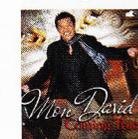
It’s tough to pluck a list. Here of the paths...

alone, handling everything album production to sales. Take Scot Albertson into a slowly developing hard as one man can. The case with indie projects paint on too broad a canvas, bling the 15 tunes for Wallace he’s determined to demonstrate can do. The result is a selection of a Whitman sameness, ballads, a couple of duets, on, a bit of whipped professional nutty addition.

So we’re subject to things as Spike Jones’ “Mirandy” against another grandiose “Music of the prayer “Hymn of the jaunty “Save the Best” Albertson has a voice with the dexterity to go with voice ideally shaped for merstein songbook (once, with a sweetly “Love”). If, on his next such a narrower focus, step forward.

## MON DAVID

*Coming True* (FreeHam)



Every singer blue Such David

Philippines-born David (veed) is like dining from smorgasbord, savoring Eckstine, Andy Bey and succession. His diction a cloudless autumn joy and playfulness and in songsmiths, extending to Antonio Carlos Jobim he can scat with the integrity of Ellington.

On ballads, including an omn “Some Other Time” “Never Let Me Go,” stirring depth of Me...

FIROOZ ZAHEDI