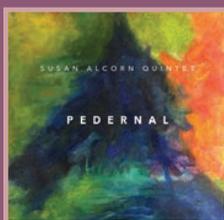


# SOUNDBITES

By Eric Snider



## Susan Alcorn Quintet

### *Pedernal* (Relative Pitch)

Alcorn takes the pedal steel into new terrain by deftly combining pleasingly melodic quasi-folk and country-tinged pieces, free improvisation, neo-chamber music and post-bop for a genuinely impressive outing. Acoustic bass, violin,

drums and especially Mary Halvorson's impressionistic guitar make for a potent combo, but it's the slippery, syrup-toned pedal steel playing that's the standout here.



## Tani Tabbal Trio

### *Now Then* (Tao Forms)

Seasoned drummer Tabbal, who has played with a roll call of avant-garde elites (Roscoe Mitchell, most notably), leads a trio with fellow veteran Michael Bisio on bass and young alto saxophonist Adam Siegel. The elders wisely let the

youngster steal the show with his airy, at times flute-like tone and knotty phrasing, garnished by chirps and chatter that's at times deliciously unhinged. The music really hangs together, whether it swings, pulses or wanders.



## Noah Preminger

### *Contemptment* (SteepleChase)

The post-bop originals are cool enough, but the playing is *ridiculous*. Preminger, 34, continues to cement himself as one of the monsters of the tenor saxophone, able to dodge between in and out, fast and slow, and continuously deliver the unexpected.

Guitar up-and-comer Max Light proves a worthy foil, and bassist Kim Cass and drummer Dan Weiss contribute support and supple shading.



## Various artists

*Blue Note Reimagined 2020* (Blue Note/Decca) Sixteen British notables, including Ezra Collective, Nubya Garcia and Ishmael Ensemble, re-envision Blue Note classics such as "Footprints," "A Shade of Jade" and "Search for Peace." Does it work? Hardly ever. The new renderings mostly

involve thickening the songs with heavy, programmed beats, massive synths and ethereal vocals. Basically, an 85-minute slog.

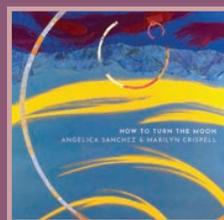


## Cat Toren's Humankind

### *Scintillating Beauty* (Panoramic)

Relatively unknown Canadian pianist-composer Toren's quintet (which includes an oud player) successfully recaptures the '60s/'70s "spiritual jazz" of the Coltranes, Pharoah Sanders et al., but with a more

organized and ear-friendly approach. The music floats, then stings, alternating between free improvisation and scripted groove sections. Tenor saxophonist Xavier Del Castillo brings the brawn.

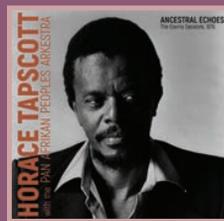


## Angelica Sanchez & Marilyn Crispell

### *How To Turn the Moon* (Pyroclastic)

Piano duets can be a mess, but not this one. While the two players don't provide a stark stylistic contrast — Sanchez regards Crispell as her mentor — they are clearly superior musicians and simpatico partners. The 10

original compositions contain everything from contemplative solo passages to rolling dual-piano thunder.



## Horace Tapscott with the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra

### *Ancestral Echoes:*

#### *The Covina Sessions, 1976* (DarkTree)

Given the renewed interest in Afro-influenced jazz (Shabaka Hutchings, Kamasi Washington), why not explore one of the American fountainheads? Los Angeles pianist/composer/activist Tapscott (1934-1999) led his 21-piece P.A.P.A. through a studio set that consists of four long compositions built on (sometimes excruciatingly) extended vamps, massive slabs of horns, unruly solos and Tapscott's piano flights. Energy trumps precision.



## Raphaël Pannier

### *Faune* (French Paradox)

Pannier — a 30-year-old drummer-composer raised in Paris, now living in Harlem — issues a beguiling 12-track set showcasing the masterful work of alto saxophonist Miguel Zenón and pianist Aaron Goldberg. With considerable

stylistic breadth, the quartet blends Pannier originals with material by Ravel, Ornette Coleman ("Lonely Woman") and Miles Davis/Wayne Shorter — a nifty, rhythmically shifting remake of "E.S.P."



Raphaël Pannier

Photo by Jean-Baptiste Millot