

Latest Notebook Entries

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Saturday, February 14, 2015

Shortly after I complained (last week's [Weekend Roundup](#)) about the fits of ideological madness working their way through the Kansas Legislature than this article comes along: [Kansas bill would reward foster parents who are married, faithful, alcohol-free.](#)

Friday, February 13, 2015

Rhapsody Streamnotes (February 2015)

Pick up text [here](#).

Monday, February 09, 2015

Music Week

Music: Current count 24491 [24455] rated (+36), 500 [503] unrated (-3).

Four of five A- records this week were 2004 releases -- three identified from the still unfinished year-end list [aggregation](#), the fourth the last 2014 CD I had ungraded (got it after year-end from one of the musicians in Italy; worth noting that there is a lot of new jazz each year released in Italy and I normally get virtually none of it). Eleven of this week's new records are 2015 releases, but so far I've only found one new record (Charles McPherson's *The Journey*) and one vault job (Red Garland Trio's *Swingin' on the Korner*) satisfy the A-threshold. That works out to 5.5% (2/36), a mere 37% of my 2014 A-list ratio (176/1189). Too early to suggest the new year sucks, but partly small sample size and partly working mostly from my mail queue instead of seeking out well regarded albums. For instance I haven't heard any of the top 25 records rated so far by [Album of the Year](#). (Well, I did start to stream Sleater-Kinney's top-rated *No Cities to Love*, but it crapped out before I heard enough to bother with. Still, not much on that list strikes me as promising -- maybe Lupe Fiasco, Belle & Sebastian, Disappears, but the critic scores are 77-73-72, so part of the problem may be a slow start.)

I'm going through last year's checklist file and seeking out a few missing year-end lists -- recent adds include Earmilk, The Finest Kiss, I Listen So You Don't Have To, Music That Isn't Bad, My Kind of Country, The Needle Drop, and a bunch of Jazz Journalists Association lists (25). Only change toward the top of the list is that Caribou finally surrendered 5th place to Flying Lotus. Taylor Swift is now tied for 14th (with Mac DeMarco), Sturgill Simpson is up to 19th, and D'Angelo to 22nd -- those three records have been gaining all along.

Jazz albums got a boost on the main list but I don't see any clear trends inside the genre, and they're still pretty far back: Wadada Leo Smith (100th), Steve Lehman (119th), Ambrose Akinmusire (137th), Mark Turner (148th -- tied with Lily Allen), Marc Ribot and Sonny Rollins (160th), and Bad Plus (168th). (Smith is only up from 106th, Lehman from 133rd, Akinmusire from 168th, Turner from 164th.) The total jazz list now includes 976 albums. The overall new albums list counts 4947 albums with one or more list mention. The actual data file has 5616 entries, plus 703 for reissues/compilations/etc.

Good chance I'll post a Rhapsody Streamnotes by the end of the week. Draft file currently has 95 reviews.

Recommended music link:

- "[What are 3 or 4 of your favorite jazz record albums of the 1970s?](#)": Found this by chance. I approve of everyone who didn't mention Weather Report (e.g., Gary Giddins). I wasn't asked, but my first pass at such a list: Miles Davis: *A Tribute to Jack Johnson* (1970), Jimmy Rushing: *The You and Me That Used to Be* (1971); Dave Holland: *Conference of the Birds* (1972); Charles Mingus: *Changes One*; Roswell Rudd: *Flexible Flyer* (1974), Ornette Coleman: *Dancing in Your Head* (1975); Arthur Blythe: *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* (1978); Air: *Lore* (1979); Art Pepper: *Straight Life*. Down to three: probably





Rushing, Rudd, and Coleman (although Rushing was more a figure of the '50s or '30s).

New records rated this week:

- **Cyrille Aimée: *Collective Consciousness*** (2014, Mack Avenue): standards singer from France but in English, backed with Django-ish guitar, a bit cutesy [r]: **B+(*)**
- **Nat Birchall Quintet: *Live in Larissa*** (2013 [2014], Sound Soul and Spirit): saxophonist channels Coltrane down to the echoes-of-big-band ambient background [r]: **A-**
- **Clark: *Clark*** (2014, Warp): Brit techno-phile goes eponymous for his seventh album -- short of ideas? still feels busy, cluttered, desperate [r]: **B**
- **Jamie Cullum: *Interlude*** (2014 [2015], Blue Note): Brit jazz singer reins in his idiosyncrasies, almost becomes likeable, but Gregory Porter cameos [r]: **B**
- **Echoes of Swing [Colin T. Dawson/Chris Hopkins/Bernd Lhotzky/Oliver Mewes]: *Blue Pepper*** (2013, ACT): trumpet-altosax-piano-drums quartet, occasional vocals dry, rooted in swing but not stuck there [r]: **B+(*)**
- **Richie Goods & Nuclear Fusion: *Three Rivers*** (2014 [2015], Richman): electric bassist from Pittsburgh, feints funk-fusion but slows down for singers [cd]: **B**
- **Mary Halvorson: *Reverse Blue*** (2013 [2014], Relative Pitch): jazz guitarist has dope radical moves, but Chris Speed tends to blunt her edge [r]: **B+(***)**
- **Alexander Hawkins: *Song Singular*** (2012 [2014], Babel): Brit jazz pianist going places, equally adept at avant and organ grinds, files a solo brief [r]: **B+(*)**
- **The Hot Sardines: *The Hot Sardines*** (2014, Decca): French singer known as Miz Liz loves Fats Waller, plays washboard, hooked a Brooklyn band for such pleasures [r]: **A-**
- **Diana Krall: *Wallflower*** (2014 [2015], Verve): my favorite jazz chanteuse picks the worst songs of the '70s, buries them in strings and wanker duets [r]: **B-**
- **Jon Lundbom and Big Five Chord: *Jeremiah*** (2014 [2015], Hot Cup): guitarist chasing two hot saxes (Jon Irabagon, Bryan Murray), catches the guest flute [cd]: **B+(***)**
- **Machinedrum: *Vapor City Archives*** (2014, Ninja Tune): left-field electronica, this a sequel to or leftovers from "Vapor City" -- actually better [r]: **B+(***)**
- **Eugene Marlow's Heritage Ensemble: *Mosaica*** (2014, MEII Enterprises): reimagining popular Hebraic melodies, with special guest cantor but lost the clave [r]: **B+(**)**
- **John Mills: *Invisible Designs*** (2014 [2015], Fable): saxophonist with singer Carmen Bradford, lit-based texts, between art-rock and jazz-operetta [cd]: **B-**
- **Kassem Mosse: *Workshop 19*** (2014, Workshop): German electronica, house but beat doesn't overwhelm, just sets up sly and clever asides [r]: **A-**
- **Mario Pavone: *Street Songs*** (2013 [2014], Playscape): bassist, leads sextet with accordion for Euro-folk feel, piano for jazz, cornet to fire things up [r]: **B+(**)**
- **Matana Roberts: *Coin Coin Chapter Three: River Run Thee*** (2014 [2015], Constellation): alto saxophonist's history lesson overwhelmed by voices/noise [r]: **B-**
- **Samo Salamon Bassless Trio: *Little River*** (2014 [2015], Sazas): guitarist from Slovenia, with Paul McCandless on reeds, plus drums, free or ambient [cd]: **B+(**)**
- **Irène Schweizer/Jürg Wickihalder: *Spring*** (2014, Intakt): avant duo, piano vs soprano sax, doesn't mesh well, nor does the piano explode [r]: **B+(*)**
- **Marc Seales: *American Songs Volume 3: Place & Time*** (2012 [2015], Origin): piano-guitar quartet, four originals, four covers, two from Curtis Mayfield [cd]: **B+(*)**
- **Ed Sheeran: *X*** (2014, Atlantic): bestselling album in UK last year, reminds me of Paul Simon and not in the worst ways, but doesn't hit often enough [r]: **B+(**)**
- **Matthew Shipp Trio: *Root of Things*** (2014, Relative Pitch): avant piano trio with Michael Bisio and Whit Dickey, something they do often [r]: **B+(***)**
- **Swamp Dogg: *The White Man Made Me Do It*** (2014, SDEG): what? release a batch of throwaways on his own label? long live the Coasters! [r]: **B+(*)**
- **Thee Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra: *Fuck Off Get Free We Pour Light on Everything*** (2014, Constellation): with titles like that who needs tunes? [r]: **B**
- **Meghan Trainor: *Title*** (2015, Epic): all about the hits, four or five catchy enough, not that she couldn't use (or doesn't need) more [r]: **B+(***)**
- **Gebhard Ullmann Basement Research: *Hat and Shoes*** (2013 [2015], Between the Lines): bass clarinet, baritone sax, trombone, love those deep bottom tones [cd]: **B+(***)**
- **Mark Wade Trio: *Event Horizon*** (2014 [2015], self-released): bassist-led piano trio, Tim Harrison on the keys, but nice to get the bass up in the mix [cd]: **B+(**)**
- **XY Quartet: *XY*** (2013 [2014], Nusica): percussion (drums + vibes) keeps group on edge, and Nicola Fazzini's alto sax dances magnificently up there [cd]: **A-**

Recent reissues, compilations, and vault discoveries rated this week:

- **Bud Powell: *Birdland 1953*** (1953 [2014], ESP-Disk, 3CD): third or fourth time these live tapes have been expanded to bait the hardcore fans, up to 3CD now [r]: **B+(***)**

Old records rated this week:

- **Ed Sheeran: *+*** (2011, Atlantic): mild-mannered Brit singer-songwriter, soft-edged, easy on ears, nothing

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