

a crescendo of intensity.

Recorded in a tiny three-metre square studio in three two-hour sessions, the smell of sweat coming off the walls is palpable as they interchange lines and rhythms to create a groove. This is perhaps best exemplified on 'Linus With The Sick Burn', where Donin's quick-witted bass ducks and weaves between sax and drums. When calm descends it's an uneasy one, 'Solenopsis' stretching out with middle eastern squalls of sax above and frenzied percussion below, while 'Katabatic' maintains a gently walking bass and knotty sax lines throughout. Perhaps this band's most mature album to date, the hard touring has forged a deep empathy between this trio, whose live shows will doubtless see these pieces evolve even further.

Tom Berry

Sarah L King Fire Horse

Peccadillo/ECN Music PD00151921

(CD, DL) ★★★★★

Sarah L King (v), James McMillan (flhn), Chris Trave (tb), Jim Watson (p, ky), Laurence Cottle (el b), Jeremy Brown (b), Ian Thomas (d), Claire Martin, Ian Shaw (bkv). Rec. date not stated



Expertly produced by Claire Martin and beautifully recorded by

James McMillan at Quiet Music Studios in Hastings, this 12-track debut from singer-songwriter Sarah L King presents eight of her originals plus imaginative arrangements of a quartet of covers. The latter includes a song which celebrates the seventieth anniversary of its first release next year, Bob Dorough and Terrell Kirk's 'Devil May Care', Billy Strayhorn's 'Lush Life', and Oliver Nelson's 'Stolen Moments' (with Gail Fisher's lyrics) in which McMillan on flugel and Chris Trave on trombone add welcome heft and textural interest.

And, pick of the bunch, if Donald Fagen had reimagined Gamble and Huff's 'Show You The Way To Go' – a Philly soul hit for The Jacksons in 1977 – and included it as a bonus track on *The Nightfly*, you suspect it might have turned out in a similar way to the swinging version heard here. There are some fine originals too. 'Holding On To Love' possesses a Steely Dan-esque smoothness, with Laurence Cottle's octave

James Brandon Lewis Quartet Transfiguration

Intakt CD400 (CD, DL) ★★★★★ **EDITOR'S CHOICE**

James Brandon Lewis (ts), Aruan Ortiz (p), Brad Jones (b) and Chad Taylor (d). Rec. 2022



In the third and final section of 'Triptych', the highlight of this outstanding album James Brandon Lewis' quartet engages in a few tempo changes. The medium fast beat on which they started comes right down to ballad pace but it is much more than the shift of speed that catches the ear. The players suggest that the notes of the initially fast theme conspire to hang if not freeze in mid air and the effect is enchanting, making what was punchy and rhythmic languorous and melodic.

They then bring the pace right back up and the shock from the slumber hits hard. It is symptomatic of the vivid drama that permeates this new work which sees Lewis, an authoritative, stately saxophonist continue to

make his quartet one of the most important bands in contemporary creative music. Its specific language, a compelling alloy of avant-garde and straightahead sensibilities that creates flexi-harmony and vari-rhythm, is steeped in history yet not trapped by any ready-made cliché. The ensemble sound can be tough, grainy and heavy, but also lyrical and plaintive, as exemplified by the beautiful gospel-tinged closer, 'Elan Vital', which betrays the known interest Lewis has for the music of Mahalia Jackson among others. This latest release further strengthens the argument that Lewis really is a modern-day tenor titan.

Kevin Le Gendre



pedal providing some potent bottom end. The heartfelt, confessional 'Born Yesterday' lingers long in the memory, and with its 6/4 rhythmic lilt, harmonic surprises and mellifluous backing vocals courtesy of Martin and Ian Shaw, 'Mystery Ride' exudes a Burt Bacharach richness. Peter Quinn

Cassie Kinoshi's seed. gratitude

International Anthem IARC81

(CD, LP, DL) ★★★★★

Cassie Kinoshi (as), Jack Banjo Courtney, Joseph Oti-Akenteng, Sheila Maurice-Grey (t), Deji Ijshakin (ts), Joe Bristow (tb), Hanna Mbuya (tba), Maria Chiara Argiro (p), Shirley Tetteh (g), Clare Bennett (f), Karl Onibuje, Rio Kai (b), Patrick Gabriel-Boyle (d), Alastair Penman (cl, bcl), Ellie Consta, Gillon Cameron (vn) Jordan Bergmans (vla) James Douglas (c). Rec. 2023



Cassie Kinoshi is staking a claim as one of the most ambitious members of what could be called the 2010s Tomorrow's Warriors graduates. She has keen orchestral interests. If her Seed Ensemble's debut *Driftglass* showed an ability to intelligently score horns and rhythm section then this new offering raises the stakes.

Everything is bigger. More brass, reeds and strings, notably the two double basses that bring great might to a mighty sound. The composing and arranging, which deploy effective counterpoint and often position Shirley Tetteh's

strikingly ethereal guitar chords as a kind of glow amid the darker harmonies, are tasteful, and Kinoshi is clearly developing her marks of distinction as a writer.

At times there are slight echoes of the atmospheric, violin-laden sound 4-Hero created with their audacious blend of drum&bass, soul and jazz in the early 2000s, but as accomplished as *gratitude* is the music would benefit from a greater variety of tempo, texture and ambiance. Kinoshi has settled into a not uninteresting groove, but she might do well to settle out of it. Kevin Le Gendre

Kjetil Mulelid Agoja

Odin ODINCD/LP9585 (CD, LP, DL)

★★★★★ **EDITOR'S CHOICE**

Kjetil Mulelid (p, ky), Bárður Reinert Poulsen (b), Andreas Winther (d), Lars Hornveth (pedal steel), plus Arve Henriksen, Mathias Eick, Lyder Røed (t), Selma French (vn), Martin Myhre Olsen (ts, ss), Trygve Seim (ts), Sasha Berliner (vib) and Signe Emmeluth (as). Rec. 6-8 December 2022



Norway's jazz scene often sits happily out on its own limb – the native sound palette swirling with folkloric flourishes and breathy lyricism. Thus, it's to burgeoning piano talent Kjetil Mulelid's credit that he's forged an intuitive link to more conventional sounds, making space for solos and collective improvisation on this wonderfully open-hearted set.

His third album to date, you know you're doing something right when you've got Jaga Jazzist mainman Lars Hornveth on shimmering lap steel on a clutch of tracks; add to that the cream of the trumpet crop with Henriksen and Eick blowing up a storm, plus a searing soprano solo from Martin Myhre Olsen on the broiling 'Heroes' and it's clear the keyboardist is an inspirational presence.

Having won plaudits for his 2021 debut solo album, simply titled *Piano*, here it's a unified group sound that's the focus on *Agoja* (apparently the first word uttered by his baby son).

With the shifting cast of musicians infusing each track with textural variety, this is large-ensemble jazz that breathes to its own natural rhythms. There are surprises too, such as NYC-based vibist Sasha Berliner's appearance on 'Waiting Song', spiking the music with her own finely wrought lines, while the preceding 'A

Prayer For Peace' rolls with an impassioned rubato feel, that allows the tenor cries of Trygve Seim and alto of Signe Emmeluth to rage and then melt into sadness.

Couple this to a softly pulsing groove sensibility on opener 'Alone' or the spaced grandeur of closer 'Kingdom, Slowly Disappearing' (with delicious, thunked, low piano notes) and one gets the feeling Mulelid has with this album created a modern Nordic masterpiece. Mike Flynn