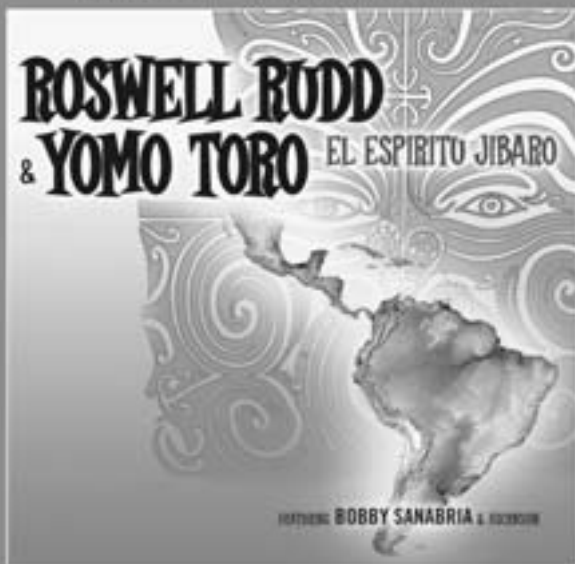


DONNY McCASLIN / IN PURSUIT
SSC 1169 - In Stores June 5



Produced by Dave Binney – who also plays alto saxophone on this recording – McCaslin is reunited with the musicians from the Soar sessions: guitarist Ben Monder, percussionist Pernell Saturnino, drummer Antonio Sanchez, and bassist Scott Colley. McCaslin's rare gift for swinging in the myriad inventions and dimensions of Afro-Latin rhythms is showcased here, as are his skills as a composer that range from straight-ahead to fusion, to the avant-garde.

ROSWELL RUDD & YOMO TORO
EL ESPÍRITU JÍBARO
SSC 1174 - In Stores June 26



For five decades, trombonist Roswell Rudd has navigated through many forms of music, from Thelonious Monk, the avant-garde stylings of the New York Art Quartet, and Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra to West African and Mongolian music. Now, on *El Espíritu Jibaro* (The Jibaro Spirit), his third Sunnyside release, Rudd teams up with the legendary, septuagenarian cuatro virtuoso Guillermo "Yomo" Toro and delivers Latin jazz-tinged adaptations to Toro's folkloric Jibaro-inspired stylings, named after the traditional music of rural Puerto Rico.



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Kicking off the second evening of a double-header at Smoke (May 4th), trumpeter/flugelhornist **Tom Harrell** preferred to let his music sing for itself by launching into a freshly penned tune, "The Call", with little proviso or pomp, deftly negotiating the complex rhythmic structure of the piece with lyric dexterity. Joining Harrell were Wayne Escoffery (tenor sax) and Johnathan Blake (drums), both regular members of his quintet, as well as Anthony Wonsey (piano) and Greg Ryan (bass). On "How 'Bout This?", with an even-eighths fusion feel, Harrell kindled a slow-burning fire, switching to flugelhorn halfway through and concluding his solo with offhand conviction, only to be relieved by Escoffery's thick-toned tenor testifying in long, spun-out lines packed with imbedded subthemes and reiterated figures. Wonsey, meantime, floated over the time, exploiting both extremities of the keyboard. By "The Fountain", everyone was loose and limber; following a gracefully rendered piano intro, Harrell soloed with bittersweet poignancy, Escoffery reacting with a pensive start, then building to an assertive climax and Wonsey contrasted rubato moodiness with tight kicking shout figures. On "Delta of the Nile," a samba with a touch of Iberian harmony, the quintet hit its longest stride: Escoffery took tonal detours that landed back on track, Wonsey and Blake locked telepathically in a series of rolling accents and Harrell's phrases seemed to evolve organically, intuitively, inevitably.

- Tom Greenland

Photograph © 2007 Tom Greenland/Midnight Son Music



Tom Harrell Quintet, Smoke

A band of bandleaders, **Kamikaze Ground Crew** has difficulty getting everyone in the right place at the right time, yet the allstars converged at The Cutting Room (May 13th) for an informal release bash for *Postcards from the Highwire*, their fifth CD. Co-led by Gina Leishman and Doug Wieselman, with more-than-able-bodied assistance from Peter Apfelbaum, Steven Bernstein, Art Baron, Marcus Rojas and Kenny Wollesen - all musical characters in their own right - the evening was an arranger's showcase, replete with fine charts utilizing a horn-ucopia of textures and timbres. Leishman's three habaneras served as pre-, inter- and postludes and her "Love-Go-Round" was a multi-layered pastiche of ambivalent Americana; Wieselman's evocative "Travels-Windows-Canvas" interlaced short motifs to pointillistic and postmodern effect; and Bernstein penned a gospel-meets-New Orleans retake on Sly Stone's "Everybody is a Star". The solos, though short, exposed the extroverted individuality of the Crew: Rojas' talking tuba, Apfelbaum's casual complexity, Baron's growling bebop, Bernstein's tailgate trumpet and Wieselman's bluesy filigree. Originally formed as a pit band for the *Flying Karamazov Brothers'* Broadway show, KGC speaks everything from gutbucket funk, whorehouse ragtime, early Ellingtonian junglese, reggae and psychedelia, all with the loose precision and easy fluency of a veteran pit band. Check your charts for the next convergence.

(TG)

Laura Andel works in mostly composed pieces for large ensembles and so the opportunities to hear her work are rare. But following notable recordings and performances of her SomnabULisT and In::tension: over the last few years, her new *Doble Mano* for nonet was a major statement from the young composer. The piece for cornet, clarinet, viola, bandoneon, bass, keyboards and two percussionists received its premiere over performances at The Kitchen (May 11th-12th) and demonstrated the light playfulness of Ennio Morricone, Nino Rota or her fellow Argentinian Astor Piazzolla (all adventurous composers regardless of their populist fields), but with the composer's own penchant for contrast and relayed statements. Rhythm and counter-rhythm crossed from instrument to instrument, section to section, with a magical business, like choreographed traffic patterns - the title of the 45-minute piece, in fact, refers to a two-way street or multiple directions. Andel made full use of her orchestra, often setting a low bass clarinet tone or high bandoneon cry alone in their respective registers or putting Taylor Ho Bynum's muted cornet against clanging finger cymbals. Carl Maguire was particularly inventive on Fender Rhodes and the vibraphone and various Gamelan percussion setups provided a wide array of shadings. When the full ensemble was engaged, the multiple counts and patterns loped like the inner workings of an overly complicated clock.

- Kurt Gottschalk



Laura Andel Orchestra, The Kitchen

Photo by Jacob Blickenstaff

There's always been something mysterious, hard to pin down, about **Muhai Richard Abrams'** music. His compositions are at once beautiful and a bit unapproachable. And the two compositions he presented May 11th at the Community Church, as part of the AACM concert series, were no different; one piece each for duo and quartet, titled "CSP I" and "CSP II" as if they were begging, challenging, like so much of his music, to be unraveled. The first half - a duo with guitarist Brandon Ross - was built on Abrams' steadily increasing tempo and volume while Ross switched between acoustic and electric, playing sometimes prepared, sometimes percussive, sometimes distorted and sometimes plainly beautiful sections. Eventually Abrams slowed to the starting point, which would have seemed to suggest an ending, but stopped playing as Ross softly repeated a chord constructed of muted, harmonic and fretted strings then ended with a beautiful line, his most elegant playing of the piece. "CSP II" was anything but a quartet version of the same piece. Abrams began similarly lightly, but saxist Aaron Stewart, bassist Brad Jones and drummer Tyshawn Sorey quickly broke in with melodic, bright, uptempo playing, at which point Abrams quickly dropped out. They went through various trios and duos in a sort of exploratory hardbop mode. As ever, the two works were even mysterious in how they were mysterious and retained a beauty that is Abrams' own.

(KG)