

Hugo Alves/Greg Burk

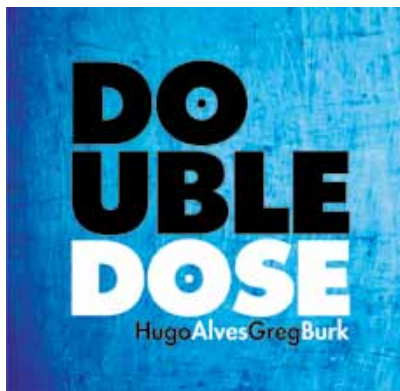
Double Dose

SELF RELEASE

★★½

Double Dose is two musicians in duet, both artists invited to perform as part of a “Double Dose” series of live shows at the Centro Cultural de Belem in Portugal in 2009. Pianist Greg Burk and trumpet/flugelhorn player Hugo Alves contribute three tunes each, complemented by George Gershwin’s “Summertime” and Gene DePaul’s “You Don’t Know What Love Is.” Listening to these standards alongside the originals, Burk and Alves’ tunes reveal more classical, recital-like qualities; their covers have the effect of loosening the performance vibe, thus highlighting the more formal aspects of their compositions and playing elsewhere.

While the playing is first-rate, such elements as pacing, mood and the artists’ rhythmic sensibilities all contribute a certain sameness from track to track. As if on a kind of Ferris wheel, most of the tunes, regardless of composer and including the covers, have a driving spirit to them, an insistent marching vibe that seems to permeate everything. This does, in fact, happen in two different ways at two different points. Burk’s “Fancy Pants,” a bebop-ish tune that breaks up the beat, while still uptempo, puts it all in reverse and has both players literally playing with tempo, tonality and alternate feelings. It’s the jazziest piece here. The other highlight comes with the closer, Alves’ “Orsara Variations First Movement.”



En route to that closer, the duo plays straightforward renditions of the famous covers, including an equally uptempo (and out-of-character) take on “You Don’t Know What Love Is.” The similar rhythmic approaches that drive most of the program also feed the incessant busyness, with little or no room for breathing. That’s why Alves’ “Orsara” is so refreshing. Each player’s obvious virtuosity is turned on its head as tempo disappears and lyrical form seems to be reinvented right before your ears; the alternately rapid-fire but unexpected nature of the playing allows both musicians to solo simultaneously. Unfortunately, the piece ends just when things start to get interesting.

—John Ephland

Double Dose: Serenity’s Distant Dawn; New Doors; Fancy Pants; La Lucha; Look To The Lion; Summertime; You Don’t Know What Love Is; Orsara Variations First Movement, (56:00)

Personnel: Hugo Alves, trumpet, flugelhorn; Greg Burk, piano, foot percussion (5).

Ordering info: hugoalves.com

Tom Harrell

The Time Of The Sun

HIGH NOTE 7222

★★★★

The first 20 seconds of Tom Harrell’s latest High Note release set an appropriately high bar for what’s to come—as in, 93 million miles high. The disc kicks off with a mesmerizing shimmer of circular sounds reminiscent of some cross between a time-lapsed cymbal crash and an aquatic sonic boom. In fact, the sounds are three recordings of “harmonies produced by the magnetic field in the outer atmosphere of the sun,” as the disc jacket indicates.

This stirringly beautiful opening becomes a point of departure for the title track, an ethereal slow-burner that exemplifies the increasingly heady material Harrell and his current quintet have been forging since 2006. Cementing the foundations of Harrell’s gorgeously inventive melodic ideas, the group’s top-notch rhythm section employs funk-filled rhythms here as adroitly as their leader finds



inspiration in the melodies of the solar system.

On “Ridin,” the funkier track, drummer Johnathan Blake diverges from his otherwise spacey atmospheric underlays to deliver a series of swinging grooves complemented by Danny Grissett’s Rhodes. The more contained and Earth-bound “Estuary” moves in tides, with gentle piano teasers lapping at Harrell’s often genius trumpet lines. A swell of energy eventually alters the tune’s direction, as Wayne Escoffery’s tenor challenges the melody with a storm of angular playing. In the final wave, those same sharp angles tumble into a smooth solo finish before being washed away by Harrell’s celestial return.

Start to finish, this is some of Harrell’s most elegant and addictively moving work.

—Jennifer Odell

The Time Of The Sun: The Time Of The Sun; Estuary; Ridin’; The Open Door; Dream Text; Modern Life; River Samba; Cactus; Otra. (62:25)

Personnel: Tom Harrell, trumpet, flugelhorn; Wayne Escoffery, tenor saxophone; Danny Grissett, piano, Fender Rhodes; Ugonna Okogwo, bass; Johnathan Blake, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Michael Dessen Trio

Forget The Pixel

CLEAN FEED 222

★★★★

Trombonists were jazz’s original electronicists. While they’ve shared the responsibility for creating sound effects with trumpeters—the Duke Ellington Orchestra had Bubber Miley as well as Tricky Sam Nanton—what acoustic instrument better provides volume, brightness, malleability and purely sensual sound? George Lewis has played slide trombone and electronics with equal facility, and his former student Michael Dessen makes the two instruments work as one on *Forget The Pixel*. Dessen switches between voluptuous lyricism and digitally distorted splatter, and his shifts between those poles never feel forced or arbitrary.

This is the trio’s second album, and it sounds like the work of a gigging band. How much of this work took place with all three men in the same room is open to conjecture. Dessen lives and teaches in Irvine, Calif., a continent away from his New York-based confederates, but he is a pioneer in telematics, the practice of long-distance, real-time collaboration. But whether their chemistry was forged with the assistance of bandwidth or frequent flier miles, it’s real. You can hear it in the way Christopher Tordini’s figures sway and give under the influence of Dan Weiss’s martial snare beats on “Licensed Unoperators (For Lisle).” It’s also evident on “Herdiphany,” where they supply stop-start responses to the pitch-shifted squiggles that Dessen pokes their way like some cartoon rabbit sticking out his impossibly elongated tongue at hunters who are both his dogged nemeses and closest associates. These guys don’t just play together—they’re playing. This playfulness, as much as their fluid negotiation of Dessen’s jagged rhythms and elaborate melodies, is the spoonful of sugar that make this rigorous improvisations go down easy.

—Bill Meyer

Forget The Pixel: Fossils And Flows; Three Sepals; And We Steal From The Silkworm; Forget The Pixel; Licensed Unoperators (For Lisle); Herdiphany; The Utopian Tense Of Green (For Mariangela). (58:07)

Personnel: Michael Dessen, trombone, electronics; Christopher Tordini, double bass; Dan Weiss, drums.

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com