

Rudiments & Brainwaves

Researchers at Stockholm's Karolinska Institutet have discovered that drummers score exceedingly well on their 60-question intelligence test. And scientists at Stanford's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics found that rhythmically directed music may remedy a range of neurological conditions. Furthermore, Harvard figured out that a drummer's internal clock doesn't move linearly like a real clock, but rather, in waves similar to human brainwaves. So next time you think the drummer has dropped (or added) a beat, know that, from his perch on Mount Intelligence, he's simply matching the elemental beat at the center of the universe.



Dylan Howe

Canadian drummer-composer **Curtis Nowosad** boldly tackles a new vision of post-hard-bop on his sophomore album, *Dialectics (Cellar Live 010115; 50:11 ★★★★★½)*. Kick-starting the album with a time-shifting funk relay on Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil," Nowosad's group of tenor player Jimmy Greene, bassist Steve Kirby, trumpeter Derrick Gardner and pianist Will Bonness smack-down the song's hard corners every time, inserting rip-snorting solos like Pro Tools slice-and-diced sample injections. Nowosad and company repeat the feat on Monk's "Bye-Ya," bridging heated Latin circulation with angular, jumping rhythms that are as thrill-inducing as mad scientists riding a roller coaster. Nowosad is fiery and scalding one moment, breezy and swinging the next, and perpetually inventive throughout. His solo on "159 & St. Nick" sounds like a drum corps racing over Niagara Falls, his garrulous flams, crush rolls and skull-cracking accents pure joy.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com

Los Angeles veteran drummer and soundtrack composer **Jerry Kalaf** presents his sensitive sticking and serenity-inducing compositions on *Welcome To Earth (Palm Mountain; 51:22 ★★★)*, performing with three different groups consisting of trio and sextet lineups. Kalaf's deeply felt, dark-toned ride cymbal playing and spacious brushwork are the subliminal stars here, his measured pulse steering his music's ethereal course. Every composition reveals Kalaf's subtle wit as well as the expressive playing of bassist Domenic Genova, saxophonist Doug Walter and pianist Rich Ruttenberg, among others. Fans of pianist Bill Evans' classic work need look no further.

Ordering info: jerrykalaf.com

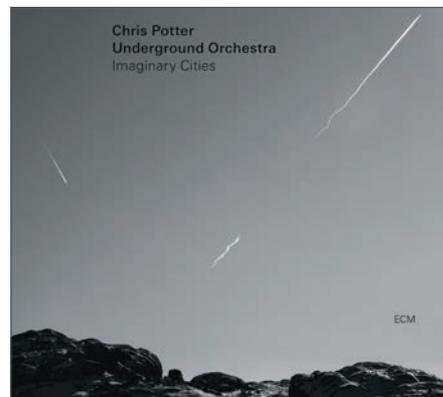
Dylan Howe's beautiful, shape-shifting and at times eerie *Subterranean (Motorik; 51:22*

★★★★★) is like an interstellar journey with Tony Williams' *Spring* and Terje Rypdal's *To Be Continued* as your collective soundtrack. The son of Yes guitarist Steve Howe, Dylan has played on over 60 recordings and released four solo albums, one playing the music of David Bowie's *Low* and *Heroes* and described as "future jazz sextet with strings and electronics." *Subterranean* embraces sizzling electronic sounds and moody European soundtracks informed by Howe's pulsating, time-chipping drumming, with a subtle English chamber music approach. Ed Blackwell-inspired drumming opens "Weeping Wall," the song nearly levitating via a marimba loop, breathy saxophone and an ascending melody. "All Saints" does a slow burn with simmering metal guitar blasts and Dolphy-inspired tenor blowing. "Neuköln-Night" turns over a nightmarish vision of queasy synth, stark piano chords and traffic sounds set aloft by Howe's elastic, spring-boarding drum interplay. Colorful and consistently surprising, *Subterranean* leads you on a journey where the destination is no more important than the ride itself. Stunning, essential.

Ordering info: dylanhowe.com

Finally, what with everyone thinking they're as smart as their drummer, some want to become the drummer, as heard on pianist **George Colligan & Theoretical Planets' Risky Notion (Origin 82681; 55:11 ★★★★★). As Colligan tells it, after recording his 25th album, it was "time for something drastically different." But can Colligan play? Well, can Jack DeJohnette play the piano? Can Chick Corea play the drums? Like these masters, Colligan acquits himself nicely in warm, open-ended compositions where he can flail, roll, stroke and swing to his heart's content. Throughout *Risky Notion*, Colligan's drumming sometimes exemplifies the naïveté of a young musician in love with the sounds of his instrument, his ideas sometimes executed hurly-burly. But Colligan's drumming is as joyful as his music is enthralling. **DB****

Ordering info: origin-records.com



Chris Potter Underground Orchestra *Imaginary Cities*

ECM 2387

★★★★½

Just as on *The Sirens*, the 2013 album that found him considering Homer, *Imaginary Cities* sees saxophonist Chris Potter thinking big and conceptually, conjuring utopian population centers. Here, he stretches his compositional palette to encompass a string quartet and an expanded version of his Underground quartet. The result is a triumphant integration of diverse elements that alternately soars and dances.

A big component of Potter's success was his decision to add two bassists to his expanded lineup—Scott Colley on double bass and Fima Ephron on electric. Together, they generate the momentum that gives *Imaginary Cities* much of its graceful motion, particularly on "Compassion," the first part of the suite for which the recording is named. Layered with David Eggar's cello, the twin bassists also create a rich, woody bottom to contrast with Adam Rogers' bright, chiming guitar, Steve Nelson's vibes and Potter's occasional foray on soprano.

Melding a jazz combo with a string quartet does not always yield good results. But with the superlative Mark Feldman on violin, Potter has a strong starting point, and he follows that up with writing that is imaginative and highly varied. On the final movement of the suite and on "Sky," the strings convey Middle Eastern and Indian moods, while on "Shadow Self" Potter taps into the Magyar folk harmonies that influenced Béla Bartók.

Finally, what stands out is the way that Potter fits his brawny tenor into this crowded field without making it sound forced. When he surges out of the ensemble on "Dualities" or suddenly dominates on "Shadow Self," he creates a palpable frisson in what is already exciting music. What has distinguished Potter in recent recordings is his ability to shift gears and introduce new thematic ideas to a line. That ability, combined with his burgeoning compositional ambitions, shows that his career has moved to a new level. —James Hale

Imaginary Cities: Lament; Imaginary Cities 1: Compassion; Imaginary Cities 2: Dualities; Imaginary Cities 3: Disintegration; Imaginary Cities 4: Rebuilding; Firefly; Shadow Self; Sky. (71:09)

Personnel: Chris Potter, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Adam Rogers, guitar; Mark Feldman, Joyce Hammann, violin; Lois Martin, viola; David Eggar, cello; Craig Taborn, piano; Steve Nelson, vibraphone, marimba; Fima Ephron, electric bass; Scott Colley, bass; Nate Smith, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com