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Jazz Northwest

New CDs by Oregon jazzers

BY BRETT CAMPBELL

Eugene appears to be enjoying a resurgence in jazz programming, thanks especially to Luna and the new Jazz Station, not to mention standbys like Jo Federigo's. Several new recordings by Northwest jazz artists would make great gifts for jazz fans.

If the phenomenal saxophone virtuoso **Tom Bergeron** (who's played with everyone from Ella Fitzgerald to the Temptations to Third Angle) were leading ensembles in New York instead of enlightening students at Western Oregon University, he would no doubt be topping national critics' polls. As it is, we're lucky to have him playing at Luna often and issuing CDs on his own Oregon label, Teal Creek. He's just issued four albums by as many different ensembles, and all are worth hearing, or giving as gifts.

Exit is Bergeron's latest recording with Labirynt, a trio of fine Polish jazzers on violin, bass and drums and this time featuring a guest trumpeter. Fueled by propulsive drumming and, often, Eastern European rhythms, this band plays like the 1980s hard bop counterrevolution never happened, happily indulging in fusion textures that Weather Report and electric Miles fans will welcome.

Jobim Now co-stars guitarist **Gerry Hagberg** along with bassist **Mark Schneider** and drummer **Alan Tarpinian** in a disc of Antonio Carlos Jobim classics. Though they capture the warmth of the avatar of bossa nova's 1960s sounds, this quartet — unlike so many Jobim cover bands — refuses to wallow in syrup or cheese, instead refreshing it with a brisk Oregon breeziness. This is an ideal late-night album for fireside relaxation or romance.

Hagberg and Bergeron are joined by Oregon (the group and the state) bassist **Glen Moore**, pianist **Matt Cooper**, drummer **Graham Lear** and trombone master **Keller Coker** on *Clovis*, which features stylish original tunes composed by the band members. From ballads to blues to a tango, the disc teems with memorable hooks and melodies (particularly on Cooper's compositions and Bergeron's "Oregon Rhapsody"), appealing to jazzheads as well casual listeners, without ever descending into the mire of so-called "smooth jazz."

All four discs succeed on their own terms. But maybe the most consistently engaging is *Western Rebellion*, which features Bergeron and Coker joined by a coterie of Portlander jazz all-stars who've played with some of the biggest names in jazz and pop music: pianist **Gordon Lee**, guitarist **Christopher Woitach**, bassist **Dan Schulte** and the great drummer **Mel Brown**. They comprise the resident jazztet at WOU, and their familiarity shows in the tight yet relaxed swing on a set of straight-ahead original compositions by the players. *Western Rebellion* is as strong an album of listener-friendly, contemporary jazz as I've

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heard this year.

Another Luna regular, Eugene's **Toby Koenigsberg** teaches at the UO and heads a sharp local trio. *Push*, his debut CD, documents a live performance at a New York club and features bassist **Ike Sturm**, drummer **Ted Poor** and busy New York saxman **Rich Perry** of the Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra, Fred Hersch's bands and the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. The disc reveals Koenigsberg's assiduous study of jazz deities from Bud Powell to John Coltrane to Wayne Shorter, including covers of classics by the latter two along with a slew of Toby K's originals. Fans of classic jazz piano trios will enjoy this one, and we can look forward to his upcoming disk of Elliot Smith's music.

Speaking of piano jazz, anyone who remembers Tomas Stanko's transcendently beautiful concert at the Shedd last winter already knows how mesmerizing his CDs are. But it was a pleasant surprise to find that the gently atmospheric piano jazz of *Trio* (ECM) by his rhythm section of crack 20-something Polish jazz musicians (pianist Marcin Wasilewski, bassist Slawomir Kurkiewicz and drummer Michal Miskiewicz), was equally ethereal. Though not produced by Oregonians, it's one of the best jazz albums of the year.

Eugene percussion fans know UO music prof **Charles Dowd** as one of the world authorities on instruments that go bang and thump, and his protégé **Tracy Freeze** plays in local orchestras. *Snapshot Live!* (CPM/USA), their album of marimba and vibraphone duets recorded in concert at Gerlinger Lounge, shows the influence of Dowd's work with Bobby Hutcherson, Andrew Hill and other jazz greats. The duo's sensitive interplay and melodic nuance on Dowd originals, covers of well known tunes by Chick Corea, and more will especially appeal to fans of '70s jazz.

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