



**Bright Light**  
**Mark Sherman (The Audiophile Society)**  
 by Scott Yanow

Mark Sherman has had a wide-ranging career. He studied classical piano and percussion, played drums in a trio with Kenny Kirkland, performed with Wynton Marsalis and was a fixture on Broadway. A busy studio musician on drums, percussion, piano and vibraphone, he worked with everyone from Peggy Lee to Larry Coryell. Sherman has led at least 18 albums and since 1997 has been best known as a vibraphonist. However in recent years he has focused more on piano (his first instrument), displaying both impressive technique and an original style within jazz' modern mainstream.

*Bright Light* features Sherman exclusively on piano in a quartet with Joe Morganelli (trumpet and flugelhorn), Dean Johnson (bass) and Tim Horner (drums); this unit was frequently Sherman's group during 2006-12. They perform seven of the leader's songs plus three jazz standards.

The first three numbers ("Bright Light", "Uplifting" and "Miles In Front"), all by Sherman, are joyful performances with original chord changes, speedy double-time lines by Magnarelli during his solos and fine spots for the leader. The mood shifts with Arthur Hamilton's "Cry Me A River", an emotional trio outing with Sherman putting plenty of feeling into the standard's melody. "Suddenly" is his tribute to the late pianist Frank Kimbrough. It is more upbeat than somber, celebrating his life rather than being excessively mournful. Sherman jams a midtempo blues with the trio ("Blues On The Run") and plays with sensitivity on his ballad "For EH", a song with one of his most memorable melodies. The remainder of the program consists of a swinging version of Joe Henderson's "Serenity", a trio exploration of Bud Powell's bop classic "Hallucinations" and the fiery "Eternal Sound".

This outing makes the case that, in addition to his other talents, Sherman is a top-notch jazz pianist.

For more information, visit [theaudiophilesociety.com](http://theaudiophilesociety.com). This project is at Smalls Sep. 20th. See Calendar.



**Nu-Jive: Nations United**  
**Troy Roberts (Toy Robot)**  
 by Dan Bilawsky

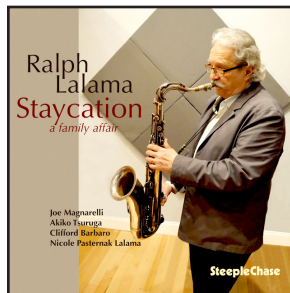
This fourth release from Troy Roberts' slick and sophisticated Nu-Jive is a global affair embracing a wide range of musical languages and styles. Reflecting the diverse backgrounds of the band's membership, with origins spanning a number of countries and continents, this work also speaks to firm belief in broad-minded expression beyond those personal and geographic anchors. With well over a decade of experience in action at this point, Nu-Jive remains as imaginative as ever while exploring this particular course.

Opening with "Funkafarian", this outfit appends soulful grooves to reggae riffing and a fired-up neo-

gospel outro. The first of ten tasty Roberts originals, it proves powerful in its marriage of multiple dimensions. Followup number "Tribes & Tribulations", drawing attention to the plights surrounding recognition for Aboriginal and African American tribes in modern times, features impassioned blowing and strong signs of life from all corners of the quintet. "Mind Melder" leans on an idea from *Star Trek* and conceptual strength(s) drawn from the music of Africa, Cuba, India and elsewhere. "Linger", built on a vamp from Roberts' "Hightail", stirs circular energy. And "Big Night In", which parties on its own terms, recognizes pandemic nightlife and offers a definite detour with a bridge built around Venezuelan merengue.

Roberts, guitarist Tim Jago, pianist/keyboard player Silvano Monasterios, bassist Eric England and drummer David Chiverton have developed their own collective sound—literally and figuratively electric, both thoughtful and hard-hitting with turn-on-a-dime capabilities and plenty of room for interplay and solo space—and they put it to good use on the first half of the program and what follows. That latter run includes "Sobrino", a slow-burner featuring England; "Big Daddy Ghetto-Rig", a cyclical joint and the latest in a series of dedicatory tracks nodding to Dana Salminen, the band's recording engineer; "Five Nations", an inviting number respecting the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca, which, together, once comprised the Iroquois Confederacy; and saxophone-and-drums stage-setter "Hypnagogia" with tension-filled closer "Dreamstation", which relishes connection, the art of transition and opportunities to overlay different thoughts. From album to album and track to track, it remains clear that Nu-Jive never runs out of things to say.

For more information, visit [toyrobotmusic.com](http://toyrobotmusic.com). This project is at Nublu 151 Sep. 9th. See Calendar.



**Staycation**  
**Ralph Lalama (SteepleChase)**  
 by Ken Dryden

Tenor saxophonist Ralph Lalama has been playing jazz for a half-century, including 35 years in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. Going stir crazy after nearly a year of the COVID-19 pandemic, he put together a recording session in early 2021 that is kind of a family affair, as it involves his wife, vocalist Nicole Pasternak Lalama, brother Dave Lalama (who contributed three originals for the date), plus a second husband-and wife team, Lalama's good friend Joe Magnarelli (trumpet) and his wife, Akiko Tsuruga (organ), plus drummer Clifford Barbaro, who isn't a blood relative but a regular collaborator for decades. The session seems to unfold effortlessly, even with a bevy of new material in addition to a pair of time-tested standards.

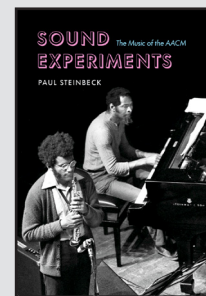
The leader's title track produces a hip groove with Lalama blending lyricism spiced with occasional grit while Magnarelli's more circular solo journey has a playfulness reminiscent of Clark Terry. The swaggering "I Could Not Compare You" was penned by Nicole Lalama with chord changes contributed by Mike Holober; it suggests the heyday of vocalese solos created on the spot to instrumentals, though in this case, the lyric came first. Any Vanguard Jazz Orchestra veteran has a great respect for Thad Jones' brilliant writing and Lalama's engaging "Thaditude" is a reworking of the late trumpeter's "Quietude".

Brother Dave doesn't play on the date, but his

compositions fit the band perfectly. His Latin-flavored "Stutter Steps" and funky "Good Trouble" would get any audience on their feet swaying along with them. The grand finale is an uptempo workout of Peter DeRose-Bert Shefter's '40s ballad "The Lamp Is Low", featuring warm vocals and soulful organ, followed by inventive trumpet and tenor solos. Throughout the date, Barbaro propels the mood, providing high-octane fuel for the group.

For more information, visit [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk). Lalama is at Ornithology Sep. 14th, Flying Lobster Sep. 24th and Village Vanguard Mondays with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. See Calendar.

## IN PRINT



**Sound Experiments: The Music of the AACM**  
**Paul Steinbeck (University of Chicago Press)**  
 by Kurt Gottschalk

The formality of the musical score has largely kept jazz masters out of the league of great composers since the inception of the form. It is difficult to point to a group more dramatically left out of the pantheon than the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Surely Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton and Henry Threadgill are as deserving of a place at the table of 20th Century musical genius as are George Crumb, Mauricio Kagel and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Innovations in scoring, it seems, are only recognized by certain demographics.

From the annals of academia, Paul Steinbeck is working to change that. An Associate Professor of Music at Washington University in St. Louis and author of *Message to Our Folks: The Art Ensemble of Chicago*, Steinbeck breaks down the recordings of nine AACM leaders and ensembles to illustrate intricacies unseen on the printed page. In particular, he examines recordings by Abrams, Braxton, Threadgill (with his early trio Air), Fred Anderson, George Lewis, Roscoe Mitchell, Wadada Leo Smith, Nicole Mitchell and AACM Great Black Music Ensemble to highlight the varying ways the composers have used improvisation and individual decision-making to create a music rooted in jazz, African and African-American traditions.

Musical analysis dominates the text, but Steinbeck's thoughtful writing makes the descriptions work on several levels: for a student, or anyone interested in learning about how the music works; for a non-musician who may breeze past the score excerpts but dig into the plain-speak breakdowns; or the attentive fan who can relate the structures discussed to stage dynamics they have witnessed.

The most valuable parts are discussions of Lewis' work in interactive electronics and a chapter including a biographical sketch of reedplayer Mwata Bowden and musical analysis of the little recognized Great Black Music Ensemble, active since 2005. The shortcoming is common in AACM writings: Steinbeck all but ignores the '90s. The book certainly doesn't claim to be comprehensive, but it is a shame to see that decade of the organization's history and, in particular Edward Wilkerson's great 8 Bold Souls, overlooked once again.

For more information, visit [press.uchicago.edu](http://press.uchicago.edu). A book release event is at Rizzoli Bookstore Sep. 9th.