



**Rhyme and Reason**  
**Jason Palmer (Giant Step Arts)**  
 by George Kanzler

A formidable talent as a trumpeter and composer, Jason Palmer showcases his many facets on this double-CD recorded live at The Jazz Gallery with a quartet of tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, bassist Matt Brewer and drummer Kendrick Scott. Palmer presents eight originals, some referencing more and less familiar pieces by other jazz artists and each employing its own unique structure, meter and/or time signature.

There's a perfect balance between the encyclopedic stylistic command of Palmer and his and Turner's avoidance of standard tropes and clichés in building their solos and the differing demands of the varied frames of the tunes, from tempo and meter to harmonic structure. The opener, "Herbs in a Glass", illustrates this balance, as well as Palmer's creative wordplay. "Glass" references pianist Robert Glasper's alternating nine beat (4-5,5-4) imposed over the chords of Herbie ("Herbs") Hancock's "Tell Me A Bedtime Story". Scott's momentum on the beat never flags as the horns weave scintillating solos over it. He and Brewer prove up to the challenge of swinging out on a variety of time signatures and rhythms throughout the album, including one of the most propulsive 7/4s in jazz so far on "The Hampton Inn (For Alan)", a contrafact on bassist-cum guitarist-singer Alan Hampton's folksy, 4/4 "Lie In It" with one of Palmer's most engaging solos. They not only nail the 6/4 on "Mark's Place", but also step into the solo spotlight, Brewer with an introductory cadenza before the horns' theme and bass solo after it, Scott with a long, rolling solo to preface Turner's turn.

The one foray into a straight time beat, albeit with a mixed meter, the title track, is a nod to the group Palmer's quartet format mirrors, Old and New Dreams, as well as the one that band emulated: Ornette Coleman's early pianoless quartet. A solo trumpet opening ushers in a very Ornette-ish, convoluted postbop melody and a string of solos over a racing tempo. A similar feel informs "Sadhana", an odd tempo choice for a tune described as "concerning meditation". It's a deadpan whimsy in contrast between title inspiration and music also present on the closer, "Kalispel Bay", named for a winter resort in Idaho but propelled by distinctly tropical, Caribbean rhythmic accents.

For more information, visit [giantsteparts.org](http://giantsteparts.org). Palmer is at InterContinental New York Barclay's Penthouse Suite May 23rd-24th. See Calendar.



**Winds of Change**  
**Alexa Tarantino (Posi-Tone)**  
 by Mark Keresman

Alexa Tarantino is a NYC-based 20-something saxophonist (alto but also soprano, plus flute) who has been working The Big Apple scene with Wynton Marsalis, DIVA Jazz Orchestra and Arturo O'Farrill as

well as co-leading the band LSAT with baritone saxophonist Lauren Sevian. *Winds of Change* is her debut as a leader, firmly in the mold of theme-solos-theme postbop. Stylistically, she's absorbed the surging but smooth, full-bodied swagger of Phil Woods, with traces of the slightly dry cool of Paul Desmond and fluid, blues-soaked, judicious dissonance of Oliver Lake. Best part is, she's melded these seemingly disparate approaches into a style of her own.

"Face Value" is a snappy, hard swinger in which Tarantino's wailing is bolstered by the gruff, punchy trombone of Nick Finzer, who sneaks in nifty dissonant asides. Tarantino's solo is a model for many young (and not so young) saxophonists—it's an uptempo piece and she scorches, but also modulates the tempo frequently, blazing at different temperatures but also knowing when to pull back. Finzer swings in a rather straightahead manner but with a rough, guttural tone (somewhere the late Roswell Rudd is smiling). Pianist Christian Sands has a lyrical flow to his solo, with muscularly heavy chord-age while the rhythm team of Joe Martin (bass) and Rudy Royston (drums) crackle with durable, persuasive swing. "Seesaw" is a midtempo churner featuring Tarantino on soprano—her tone lithe, solo soulful and passionate but tempered with a dab of reflective melancholy; bass is nimble and sinewy and piano keys shimmer like a soft summer rain. "Without" is Tarantino tipping her hepcat fedora to the classic ballad tradition: languid, almost mournfully slow tempo; sparse piano chords that could be coming from the rehearsal space next door; and the leader slowly letting the blues out of her soul with both sustained and fluttering notes.

The program is a nice balance of swingers, mid- and downtempo numbers, all very concise yet retaining spontaneity. As debut discs go, *Winds of Change* is a nice summary view of what Tarantino can do and a peek at future glories.

For more information, visit [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com). This project is at Dizzy's Club May 28th. See Calendar.



**Cinematic Radio**  
**Lluís Capdevila (s/r)**  
 by Donald Elfman

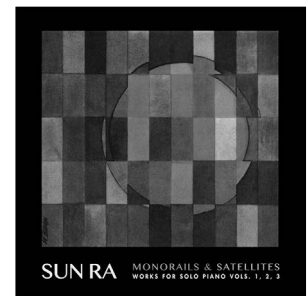
The compositions on pianist Lluís Capdevila's new recording are gloriously of a piece—elegant, sensual, soulful and smart. Accompanied by just bassist Petros Klampanis (also on percussion), with Tom Harrell on flugelhorn on one track, Capdevila plays quietly and simply with a 'cinematic' sense of line and space. Think of the recently departed Michel Legrand and the way he blended popular, jazz, classical and film music elements and you'll get a sense of how Capdevila approaches composition and improvisation here.

The album opens with one of those Legrand-like melodies, "Malaga", with the composer playing intimately over perfectly blended bass accompaniment, improvising sweet single notes with gentle chordal rhythms in the left hand. It's to the point and evanescent, over before we know it. The next two tunes, "Alone" and "Misery", share the bittersweet qualities implicit in their titles, but never so demanding of pity that we can't take in their gorgeous melodic essence. Even the tunes that have a bit of a bounce, like "Haven't We Met Before" or "Seasonal Blues", brilliantly settle into serene romantic grooves. Both have percussion fills, the latter even with a funky line suggesting classic jazz

piano performance.

"Changing" shows us the rapport between Harrell and Capdevila, both sharing a melodic approach to improvising. There's a slight bluesy lilt to the tune into which both add individual colors. The one tune that Capdevila did not write is "Adoro", hymn-like and with a classical feel of a European love ballad. "The Wheel (of Life)" is another moving hymn to what moves us forward in life and love. The album closes with "Smoothly", a tender lovely waltz.

For more information, visit [lluiscapdevila.com](http://lluiscapdevila.com). This project is at Jazz at Kitano May 23rd. See Calendar.



**Monorails & Satellites (Works for Solo Piano, Vol. 1, 2, 3)**  
**Sun Ra (Cosmic Myth)**  
 by Annie Murnighan

The original artwork for *Monorails & Satellites*, solo piano works recorded in 1966 by Sun Ra (born 84 years and dying 26 years ago this month), featured two large hands floating in the cosmos; one, with its fingers pressed down on the keys of a piano and the other transfixed above, preparing to strike. Stars and planets float in the background, evoking a characteristically extraterrestrial concern, one for which Sun Ra has become known since the late '30s after he was allegedly transported to Saturn via UFO.

Now the original two volumes have been reissued by Cosmic Myth Records, joined by a third consisting of nine songs (five originals, four standards) unearthed from the Sun Ra Archive. Though the original artwork was certainly fitting, the updated cover is perhaps a more apt representation of the music herein. Textured and colorful geometric shapes overlap to create a fragmented image of the planet that has so defined Sun Ra's creative journey, epitomizing the abstract, fecund energy pervading the collection.

The bombast found in the pianist's group releases translates into a vigorous and at times aggressive playing style clearly influenced by the luminous work of Jelly Roll Morton. Although the material is largely abstract and often atonal, moments of stilted beauty frequently emerge, such as on "Skylight", a stumbling yet delicate and romantic piece almost reminiscent of Erik Satie's oneiric works. "The Alter Destiny", much like Disc Two's "Perspective Prisms of Is" and "Calundronious", is oddly, jarringly beautiful, as melancholic and sentimental melodies, played almost abrasively, lend the atmosphere a curious and unsettled romanticism. Listening without pause also highlights the fluidity of the pieces, as the line between each often blurs. "Soundscapes" flows into "The Eternal Tomorrow", a glittering, pensive piece of rare delicacy.

Disc Three provides a welcome addition to the already captivating original release. Like the preceding discs, this collection is most fascinating in the way it oscillates dramatically between disparate moods without warning. On "Today is Not Yesterday", a frantic showdown between harmonic ideas moves into a quiet repetition in the upper register—in what would be a fitting soundtrack to *The Twilight Zone*—before a stuttered, abstract array of chord work miraculously transforms into a beautifully simple melody. Following the artist's ideas can feel like a scavenger hunt, full of striking non-sequiturs that nonetheless make sense within Sun Ra's incomparable soundworld.

For more information, visit [sunramusic.bandcamp.com](http://sunramusic.bandcamp.com)