



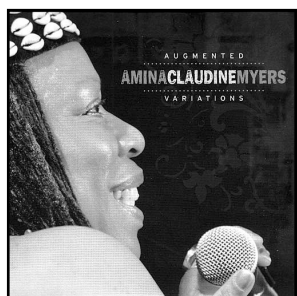
Drum Suite Life
Newman Taylor Baker Singin' Drums (Innova)
 by Lyn Horton

Nothing is as bold, focused or speaks so well to the versatility of a performer than a solo drum recording. Fellowship winner from the New York Foundation for the Arts in Music Composition, jazz drummer and classical percussionist Newman Taylor Baker has released *Drum Suite Life*, revealing the range of the basic drum set in seamless transitions from one short improvisation to the next, the first recording in his *Singin' Drums* project.

The design of the record signifies the mindfulness with which Baker assigns meaning to each work. This arises from the creation of specific rhythm patterns; those patterns incorporate within them palpably specific touches in relation to each type of drum being played. Baker lays a strong groundwork in the heaviness of the first piece, heard in the deep tones of the bass drum. To emphasize the pulse of the bass tonality, he often breaks the steadiness by flicking his sticks on the snare or clicking the hi-hat, yet never sacrificing the overriding pulse. This process illustrates how he uses contrasting sounds and groupings of figures to underscore the predominant rhythm throughout the entire album. Two examples of his intentions come through in "Thank You, Ms. Jones, Hold On!", dedicated to the first black woman timpanist in the US, Elayne Jones, Baker expanding the sound of the tom to simulate the timpani, and "Bosom of Abraham", where the bold striking of the tom and the incessant marching rolls on the snare become a metaphorical amalgamation of determination and faith.

That Baker's palm circling the snare cuts through the bold hand drumming in the closing "Handpeace" accentuates the idea of humanity in all its fragile variations, as does the frequent audible sound of Baker taking breaths or singing throughout the recording.

For more information, visit innova.mu. Baker is at The Stone Nov. 12th with Henry Grimes and 18th as a leader. See Calendar.



Augmented Variations
Amina Claudine Myers (s/r)
 by Kurt Gottschalk

It's been a surprising 25 years since there's been a significant new release from Amina Claudine Myers. There have been appearances since then, but it's been all too quiet since her apogee of *Country Girl* and *Jumpin' in the Sugar Bowl* in the mid '80s. With those discs, she set a combination of groove jazz and spiritual song with a wizened spirituality that established her as a sort of singing Toni Morrison. *Augmented Variations*, however, at least starts to make up for the absence with what could be counted as three new LPs of material. The two-CD set is divided into distinct sections, displaying a nice range in Myers'

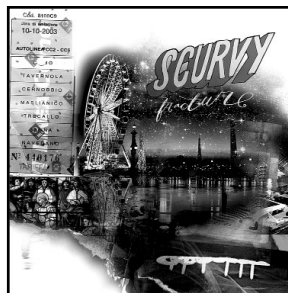
work. A powerful solo piano set and a half-dozen pieces for jazz trio bookend a newer aspect of Myers' work: instrumental trio with five vocalists.

The opening 40 minutes feature Myers at the piano and at her best, swaying easily between jazz, gospel and deeper introspection. Far from the R&B swing of which she's well capable, it's a serious session. Gospel is central to Myers' work, but not usually of the tent-revival variety. She more often draws from a more formal well, recalling the side of the tradition where Mahalia Jackson and Paul Robeson once resided. In her solo set, she sings the sacred, but also ventures into some bold vocalese passages as deeply personal as anything she's recorded.

The rest of the first disc is given to the most remarkable project here. The Amina Claudine Myers Voice Quartet with Instrumental Trio is a remarkable new direction for the bandleader. The six tracks (coming in at 36 minutes) were recorded live in France in 2007 by a band made up of Myers on piano, organ and vocals with additional vocalists Janet Jordan, Clinton Ingram, Raphael Sligh and Richarda Abrams [the latter being both the daughter of Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians-New York President Muhal Richard Abrams (Myers is also a long-standing member) and the revved up emcee for AACM-NY concerts]. The 13-minute opening track alone shows a boldness in form that Myers hasn't displayed on record before. The six selections smartly place her devotion in a jazz setting that has few antecedents, reminiscent - if to anything - of Duke Ellington's sacred music.

The second disc (and the third album in this slightly fictive subdividing) collects tracks from 2005 and 2008 European dates by the same instrumental trio as heard with the vocal group. The talented AACM drummer Reggie Nicholson has long been Myers' timekeeper of choice while Oluwu ben Judah ably replaces Thomas Palmer on acoustic and electric basses. Keeping with the 40-minute session-length, the trio portion may not add to her discography as significantly as the first disc, but it's a good time. "Hardtime Blues", for example, goes on pure rote with the most basic of blues tropes, subsisting only by the spirit of the playing. She reaches back to the 1988 album *Amina* for two of the six songs ("Happiness" and "Song From the West"), adding to the easy satisfaction of the disc. It is, in a sense, the Saturday night before the Sunday morning of Disc One. And all around, it's great to hear her again.

For more information, visit myspace.com/aminaclaudinemyers. Myers is at Community Church of New York Nov. 19th. See Calendar.



Fracture
Scurvy (Hi4Head)
 by Wilbur MacKenzie

Saxophonist Johnny Butler's band Scurvy underscores close relationship between punk rock abandon and the freedom of improvised music while also incorporating ambitious compositional ideals found in both progressive rock and modern jazz. With a horn frontline of Butler and Ryan Snow on trombone and the rhythm section of viciously incisive guitarist Adam Caine, bassist Rus Wimbish and ace drummer Jason Nazary, there is great potential to juxtapose multiple sonic elements that would otherwise contrast wildly.

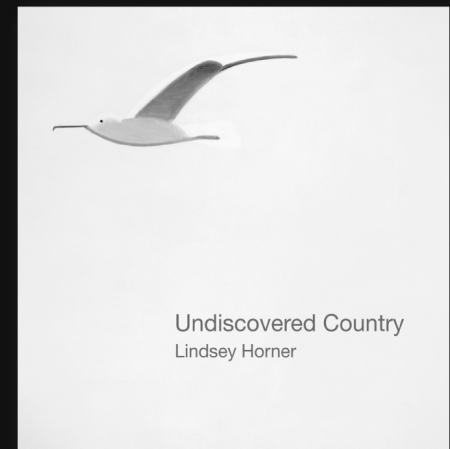
The band's extensive road experience is evident in the cohesion with which they run through the material. Prog-heavy moments like "Jenny Found a Hole" or "Half-Brain" contrast with the improvisational abandon of "Snow Caine" or "Side A Is Dead". "Chime In" seems to spit the difference to great effect, sounding something like the defiantly unkempt offspring of Captain Beefheart, Henry Cow and Slayer. The Henry Cow comparison is perhaps most notable on "Inversion", Butler's melody floating above a dizzying rhythmic construction, as things inevitably explode into a frenzied free improvisation before returning to the theme.

The lion's share of the feature spots ends up going to Caine and Snow (often playing a heavily distorted amplified trombone). Butler's role here is a bit subtle in this very un-subtle music: with a recent superb solo release demonstrating his incredible saxophone playing, in this project he sticks closer to his melodies, allowing the band to put more of their personal voice into the mix. Nazary's unaccompanied introduction to "One, Two, Three" is a visceral excursion, effectively set up by the preceding introspective drone piece "Irradiance". Butler's saxophone solo on "One, Two, Three" floats euphorically above the thicket of pounding bass, fractured guitar chords and propulsive drumming. The maze-like hocketing in the closer, "QNG", rises and falls, opening up to a great trombone solo, phrases tossed off in various directions as things transition to a blazing Caine/Butler duo. Throughout, Wimbish's bass grounds things with both structure and fluidity. The entire band gradually fades into the distance, leaving only a reverb-laden melody that ultimately fades as well.

For more information, visit hi4headrecords.com

Lindsey Horner

Undiscovered Country



Undiscovered Country
 Lindsey Horner

With *Undiscovered Country*, bassist, composer and multi-instrumentalist Lindsey Horner pulls together many influences of his varied career to craft a unique and eclectic World Jazz statement.

Featuring Irish music legend *Andy Irvine*.

Available through www.lindseyhorner.com, iTunes, artistShare, Downtownmusicgallery.com, CDBaby, Amazon and wherever fine music is sold.

Lindsey Horner is appearing with the band *Heavy Favorites*, at Cornelia Street Café Tuesday, November 9th at 8:30 pm.