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AMERICA'S JAZZ MAGAZINE

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Inside a Master Drummer's
Spiritual Journey

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Infinite Beats

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on Elvin Jones,
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& More

OutBeat

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Their Unlikely Duets
Album Reviewed



Billy Childs
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INSIDE! JAZZ
EDUCATION
GUIDE

Spalding/Wayne Shorter pairing on "Upstairs by a Chinese Lamp," *Map to the Treasure* matches singers to songs with unerring taste. Renée Fleming opens with "New York Tendaberry," her darkly hued phrases framed by Yo-Yo Ma's cello in a performance that Childs describes as "in between a jazz ballad and an art song." Susan Tedeschi and alto saxophonist Steve Wilson reach similar heights on the harrowing and beautiful "Gibson Street."

By slowing the tempo of "Save the Country," crafting ravishing string parts and enlisting Shawn Colvin with trumpeter Chris Botti, Childs arrives at another kind of emotion within the song. "We're talking about America and I wanted it to sound American," he says, "almost a military, dirge-like, valedictory type of approach on the trumpet, a symbol of spring, an American symbol. It's very triadic; the language is very Copland-esque and hymn-like. We wanted to portray it that way." The American theme resurfaces on the closing track, Alison Krauss' brisk and slightly ominous

minor-key version of "And When I Die," which elicits a formidable Dobro solo from Jerry Douglas.

Lisa Fischer, featured so powerfully in the documentary film *20 Feet From Stardom*, conjures a musical universe on "Map to the Treasure," perhaps the most formally and sonically ambitious song of the set. It was also Fischer who brought Becca Stevens to Childs' attention, and "The Confession," an uptempo beast of a song, proved the right choice. "Working with Billy has been such a gift," Stevens says, "and it's led to an awesome collaboration. Now whenever I go to L.A. we write music together and we're working on a duo project."

Late in "The Confession" there's a grip-your-seat moment—a startlingly intense solo eruption on Wurlitzer electric piano—that says everything about Childs' passion for his subject. "I think that keyboard solo is more the energy of Laura at the end of the song," Stevens says. "I take the back seat with Laura's singing part, it's like a shout chorus, and then Billy becomes Laura with his screaming solo." **DAVID R. ADLER**

Of Rio & Reinvention

PRODUCERS FRANK AND CHRISTIAN BERMAN MATCH CLASSIC VOCAL TRACKS TO FRESH BRAZILIAN-STYLED ARRANGEMENTS

It's the feel-good album of 2014. But it dates, at least in part, from 1958. Also 1961. And 1964, '69, '78 and '82. *The Brazil Connection*, brainchild of producer brothers Frank and Christian Berman, brings together 12 classic vocals, spanning jazz, soul and pop, all refitted to new bossa or samba arrangements as performed by a stellar assortment of Brazilian jazz musicians. Billed as Studio Rio, the lineup includes such living legends as Marcos Valle and Roberto Menescal.

Released in June, the sun-dappled disc caught the immediate attention of radio programmers and, according to the *JazzWeek* Radio Chart, was picked up by more than 100 stations by mid-summer. Toronto's JAZZ-FM91, for example, added almost every track in heavy rotation—not just cuts from Billie Holiday, Mel Tormé, Sarah Vaughan and Nina Simone but also Sly and the Family Stone, Bill Withers and Aretha Franklin. "Often these kinds of projects lack credibility and compromise music that was just right in its original state," says Ross Porter, the station's CEO, "[but] Frank and Christian actually contribute to the artistic soul of the originals. ... [They've] done such a good, creative job in reimagining and redefining the music, it was perfect programming for us, particularly during the summer months."

Though perhaps best known for their Grammy-winning remix of Baha Men's "Who Let the Dogs Out" in 2000, the German-born Bermans are no strangers to successful music mash-ups. Eight years ago, they teamed with Artists Project Earth founder Kenny Young to create *Rhythms del Mundo*, persuading the likes of Coldplay, Sting and Maroon 5 to have their songs refitted to Cuban arrangements

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BLACK CUBE SP
Return the
Tides



Return The Tides is a deeply felt tribute and requiem for Rob Mazurek's mother; a hazy, gauzy collision of electronics, avant-garde jazz, tropicalia, post-rock and noise, with a deep spiritual vibe.

THE CELLAR
AND POINT
Ambit



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▲ Frank (left) and Christian Berman

performed by musicians from the Buena Vista Social Club, with all proceeds donated to APE. Several sequels followed.

The inspiration for *The Brazil Connection* came, says Christian, out of the blue last summer. “We were sitting on a balcony in Berlin and some neighbor was playing ‘You’ve Changed’ by Billie Holiday [from her 1958 LP *Lady in Satin*],” he recalls. “Perhaps it was the summer mood, but it somehow felt like a bossa nova, and that’s how the idea was born, to pair truly iconic American singers with tasteful Brazilian music.”

Looking for a partner with a rich catalog, the Bermans approached Sony, a label Frank deems “a perfect fit.” The actual song selection process took place in Rio, where the Bermans parked themselves in an Internet café a block from the beach. “We sat there for two weeks just listening to songs and watching the Brazilian people go by,” says Frank, 48. “At night we went out to jazz clubs to listen to Brazilian music. We quickly developed a feel for what rhythms would go with which vocals—bossa novas for the slower ones and sambas for the ones that were a little groovier.”

Armed with a list of 40 tunes, they met with several noted Brazilian arrangers and musicians, including guitarists Mario

Adnet and Torcuato Mariano and longtime Antonio Carlos Jobim drummer Paulo Braga. “We wanted to make an album that is truly authentic, that the musicians would really be proud of,” says Frank.

The biggest hurdle was isolating the original vocal tracks. For more modern selections, like Marvin Gaye’s “Sexual Healing” and Johnny Nash’s “I Can See Clearly Now,” multi-track masters existed. But the older cuts posed a significant challenge until the brothers discovered a Berlin-based company called Science of Sound. “It’s a team of very nerdy scientists and high-quality engineers,” says Frank. “Together they built this really interesting model of algorithms where they can keep the vocal intact and get rid of everything else. Like on [Holiday’s ‘You’ve Changed’], you can hear every whisper, every syllable.”

As the Rio recording sessions took shape, the Bermans’ dream of involving Valle and Menescal was fulfilled. When they shared the playlist with Valle, he immediately leapt on Andy Williams’ “Music to Watch Girls By” from 1967. In the early ’60s, Williams had been instrumental in helping Valle gain a professional foothold in the U.S. In appreciation, says Christian, “He wanted to do something really special with the song.” Menescal fell in love with Aretha Franklin’s 1964 version of “Walk on By.”

Most intriguing for jazz fans will be the Bermans’ reshaping of “Take Five,” based on a live 1961 recording by Carmen McRae with Dave Brubeck. It is the only track that includes more of the original than just the vocal, with both Brubeck’s piano intro and Paul Desmond’s sax solo preserved. “It was a challenge because of its unusual time signature,” says Christian, 45. “It took several hours to work out a groove pattern that had that signature but also had a bossa-nova flair. We tried a few rhythms but it really wasn’t working. Then all of a sudden Mario was playing guitar and the drummer, Jurim [Moreira], was playing the backbeat and it worked out perfectly!”

Up next, the brothers are planning an ambitious world tour featuring Brazilian musicians and the vintage vocal tracks—possibly using hologram technology to bring the original artists to life—plus contemporary American and Brazilian singers. And, yes, a second *Brazil Connection* is already in the works. **CHRISTOPHER LOUDON**

ALONSO MONTEIRO

Humble Beginnings, Full of Heart

PHILADELPHIA’S OUTBEAT FESTIVAL CELEBRATES JAZZ’S LGBT LEGACY

Assessing the impact of an occasion as important as the OutBeat Jazz Festival is challenging. The four-day event, hosted in Philadelphia Sept. 18-21, was the first of its kind in the United States,

because it celebrated the contributions of jazz’s LGBT musicians. But even if the intentions were pure and ambitious and the performances were excellent, attendance at certain events made OutBeat’s debut both historic and humble.

As a gay music journalist and—full disclosure—someone who moderated two panels at OutBeat, I had high hopes. The festival did have a promising start though. On Friday night I caught a mesmerizing performance by the Fred Hersch Trio

at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as well as the Philadelphia Jazz Project’s touching tribute to Billy Strayhorn at the Suzanne Roberts Theatre. Both of those performances sold out.

Audiences for Saturday’s performances, including drum-