

More Jazz (and more) in DSD

Andrew Everard takes a listen to the latest additions to the ever-growing catalogue of releases in DSD, from classic jazz to classical compilations – and Russian church bells recorded on location



WARREN VACHÉ First Time Out

2XHD 2XHDJA1190 DSD64/128/256/512/DXD

As the title of this album suggests, the tracks here – well, at least the first five – are from trumpeter Vaché’s 1976 debut recording sessions, accompanied and co-produced by guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli. The remaining four come from a session recorded some 16 years later – but again with Pizzarelli providing the gentle, considered backing.

This is a pretty undemanding set, restored and remastered jobs by the always-reliable 2xHD team from the original analogue tapes to the company’s DXD system, and thence on to various DSD formats, as well as the original transfer format in which the release is available.

Featuring standards from composers such as Irving Berlin, Billy Strayhorn, and Rodgers & Hart, this is as undemanding a set

of tunes as anyone could want, recorded in wonderfully rich and detailed sound, with a definite lushness about it. That said, while the musicianship is certainly there in spades, it never really takes flight, even though it’s still a pleasant enough way to spend half an hour, and an enjoyable audio experience.



OYSTER DUO Stolen Pearls

Channel Classics CCS43121
DSD64/128/256/512/DXD

I first encountered the constituent parts of the Oyster Duo – pianist Anna Fedorova and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra double bass player Nicky Schwartz – at a recording session for the former’s Channel Classics debut release, *Four Fantasies*.

Invited by the label’s founder, Jared Sacks, I listened in to the sessions in Eindhoven’s Muziekgebouw (and to Schwartz rehearsing in the ‘green room’), spent the evening with them at the Sacks house, and next morning watched with amusement as Schwartz trundled his ‘big fiddle’ on its single wheel onto the train from Eindhoven back to Amsterdam – they home, me to the airport.

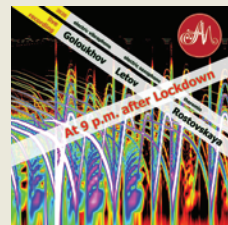
Since then, the two have become even more of a duo; they were married some time back, and now have released this first album as the Oyster Duo, again for Channel Classics.

And a thrilling set it is too, opening with Ginastera’s suite of five Argentinian songs, and encompassing pieces from Gershwin and Bloch to Shostakovich, Schumann and Schubert – all pieces written for other instruments, but arranged by the pair over the past five years. And this well-rehearsed repertoire sounds fabulous, from the impact and delicacy of Fedorova’s piano to the rich resonance of Schwartz’s bass., all captured

beautifully in the studio by engineer Jochem Geene, recording the music straight to DXD. There’s some serious bass weight on this album, and on the wrong system this can swamp the more delicate pianism at times – but find a set up with both low-end extension and control, and it sounds superb.

SERGEY LETOV, VLADIMIR GOLOUKHOV, OLESYA ROSTOVSKAYA At 9 P.M. after Lockdown

Artes Mirabiles AM210014
DSD64/128/256/512/DXD



This is an intriguing set: the music here is improvised, and the album takes its title from the fact it was recorded at that time on August 1st last year, the

first day after the lifting of the pandemic lockdown in Moscow.

As Valdimir Goloukhov, who plays electric vibraphone on this set, recorded live, recalls, ‘During the concert there were bonfires around the stage. People who on the one hand, longed to be part of a crowd, and on the other, wandered around trying to observe social distancing.’

He continues ‘One could sense a confrontation of opposite moods in the air. The musicians got hold of an audience, the audience got hold of live music, and nature itself helped: was it day, night, or dusk?’

He’s joined here by Letov on electric saxophone and theremin player Rostovskaya, and if that line-up has you expecting something decidedly odd, then there’s no need to fear: the tracks here, while unusual, set up fascinating rhythms and soundscapes, and more than justify repeated listening, just to appreciate every nuance of the complexities of the performances.

Even better, they have more to give: like many of the recordings on the Native DSD web-shop, this one is available in both two- and five-channel versions, but – even more intriguing – also as a binaural download for those who listen on headphones, and at a discount price if you buy it with one or both of the other formats. I’d really suggest you give the binaural version a shot: it’s a remarkably immersive experience, really throwing the listener into the heart of the music-making, with bags of ambience.



**FORESTARE
12 Guitar
Ensemble**

2xHD 2XHDFO1203
DSD64/128/256/512/
DXD

This set almost does what it says on the tin – a more accurate title would be ‘12 Guitar, Two Double Bass and Occasional Percussion Ensemble’ – but while the massed instruments may stir thoughts of classical works played by ukulele orchestras, this is a very long way from that.

The dozen guitarists of the Forestare Ensemble have long been performing together, and it shows in this wonderfully energetic and detailed recording of works by Bach, Vivaldi and Jean-Baptiste Lully, fully revealing the immersion of the players in the Baroque styles here – impressive, since to date their repertoire has been somewhat more modern.

Of course, the exemplary recording to DXD, by the 2xHD team of producer André Perry and recording and mastering engineering René Laflamme, plays its part, too, not only in capturing all the intricacies of the scoring and playing, but also the sheer brio of the performances and the lively Montréal church acoustic in which the performances took place.

That’s in no small measure due to the recording technique: faced with 15 musicians, the team eschewed a multiple-microphone approach, instead going for just three Schoeps mikes in a pure Decca Tree configuration of left, right and centre.

It all makes for a delightfully lucid, unforced sound, inviting the listener to make the decision whether to focus closer into the generous soundstage or just let the music pour forth. Either approach is equally rewarding.

**ROLAND HEIDRICH & THE ABSTRACT
A Fine Line In Between**

Hunnia Records HRES2105
DSD64/128/256/512/DXD



There are some consistently high-quality and interesting recordings coming out of Hungary’s SuperSize Recording Studio

and Hunnia Records, and this one by guitarist and experimenter Roland Heidrich is a fine example.

Heidrich blurs the lines between jazz, prog and the music of his native Hungary, and here he lays it all down with an easy groove, courtesy of his able sidesmen Csaba Pengő on bass, and drummer Zsolt Sárvári Kovács, on opening tracks ‘Guru’ and ‘Radio’. The trio is aided and abetted by a couple of hugely inventive sax players – János Ávéd on tenor and soprano, Gergő Kovács on baritone – who occasionally take flight, the three principals stepping back and keeping the rhythm motoring.

Then there are gentle moments such as the guitar/sax duo of ‘This Is A Song’ – which indeed it is, but a very simple and effective one – and the flat-out charging bonkersness and complexity of the appropriately-titled ‘Crazy’, which closes the album, with the performers soaring off in all directions and each taking a solo in classic jazz-gig style.

It all comes together to create a set as innovative as it is energising, and with a real live feel captured in the studio by engineer Gábor Halász straight to DSD256. It’s a fresh and powerful sound, and always fascinating.

**DARIUS BATTIWALLA
Percy Whitlock: Organ Sonata**

Base 2 Music BASE209
DSD64/128/256/512/384kHz WAV



I must admit I wasn’t familiar with Whitlock’s Organ Sonata, the headline act in this recital by Darius Battiwalla on the 1913 JJ Binns organ

in Rochdale Town Hall, but it was no surprise to discover that the label on which it’s released specialises in organ recordings, so well has engineer Jake Purches captured the essence of a large, impressive instrument in a generous space.

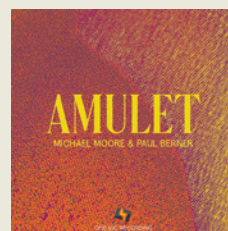
The air, ambience and resonance is so palpable even in stereo that one could hardly hanker for the optional surround sound version also available, but for the audiophile train-spotters, Purches explains that he used ‘a pentangle layout for capturing 5.1 surround and stereo sound. Three omnidirectional microphones are at the front capturing the organ on a large high reach mast with the two rear omni

microphones about 16 meters behind the main mast capturing the acoustics.’ From the microphones, the sound was processed by a 12-channel Yamaha ADC, and captured in 384kHz/24bit PCM, and very glorious it sounds, too.

But it’s not just on a technical level that this set delivers the goods; right from the opening ‘Toccata’ by Lynnwood Farnam, who apparently wrote this less-than-two-minute piece as a rapid test for getting the measure when trying out new instruments on tour, this recording is a *tour de force* from the organist. It’s full of discoveries, both musical and audio, not least the absolute presence and majesty of the instrument. And the booklet, both detailed and beautifully illustrated, is as appealing to this occasional organ listener as I am sure it will be to true enthusiasts.

**MICHAEL MOORE & PAUL BERNER
Amulet**

Sound Liaison SL1048A
DSD64/128/256/512/384kHz WAV



This is about as simple a recording as you’re ever going to hear: two musicians, one microphone and each track performed live,

straight to DXD recording – and it’s totally enchanting. Covering a range of well-known tunes, and some compositions of their own, clarinetist Moore and bassist Berner were recorded at Hilversum by Frans de Rond using a single Josephson C7005 stereo microphone,

So the ambience and soundstaging you here were a matter of configuring the studio and the position of the performers to create the desired sound. Then the two were invited to the control room to hear the sound, and “‘This is us, this is how we sound, this is so real’” was Michael’s reaction upon listening. Paul just smiled at Frans and said: “Let’s play!”

All that spontaneity comes over in spades in this set, which has the usual Sound Liaison recording quality, plus that unmistakable sense of two musicians just bouncing off each other, improvising and making the shape of the songs up as they went along. This is as live as it gets, with a real ‘in the room with the musicians’ impression.