



## Fringe Gift Guide, Vol. 1

### Fringe Beat

By Josef Woodard

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**Joe Zawinul and the Zawinul Syndicate, 75 (Heads Up)** : In the first of what we assume will be many posthumous recording releases, the prolific and hugely influential keyboardist Joe Zawinul is paid homage with this live recording from Lugano, Switzerland, on his 75th birthday, less than two months before he died of cancer in his hometown of Vienna. Despite his illness at the time, the double-disc set is an alive and pumping, offering a vibrant example of what his electro-world-jazz band Zawinul Syndicate was capable of, and showcasing two African

powerhouses—the electric bass sensation **Linley Marthe** and drummer **Paco Sery**. Much of the set list will be familiar to Syndicate fans, but the poignant centerpiece of the album comes at the end, when **Wayne Shorter**—Zawinul’s comrade in **Weather Report**—arrives for a rare reunion on a duo version of the introspective Zawinul classic “In a Silent Way.” On that captivating, contemplative track, the pair converse musically like old friends, catching up and—as history would soon validate—offering fond farewells.

**Jeff Beck, performing this week... live at Ronnie Scott’s (Eagle Records) :** Ears and memory banks are still buzzing from Jeff Beck’s stunning Arlington Theatre performance two years back. A boyish sixty-something, the godlike guitar hero still takes music seriously and avoids easy routes. As a belated souvenir of that time and that tour (featuring drummer **Vinnie Colaiuta**), we get this feisty fine album recorded in Ronnie Scott’s, London’s long-standing jazz central. The jazz connection is more than relevant, given a set list including **Mahavishnu Orchestra** tunes, **Charles Mingus**’s “Goodbye Pork Pie Hat” (in Beck’s slinky, inimitable style), and Beck’s riffing jazz-rock gem “Led Boots.” Beck also “sings” his heart out on instrumental pop and soul tunes, whether **Stevie Wonder**’s “Cause We Started as Lovers” or a new take on the **Beatles**’ “Day in the Life”—decidedly different from **Wes Montgomery**’s idea on the subject. Jeff Beck has his own ideas, and his own way of articulating them, then and now.

**Esperanza Spalding, Junjo (Ayva) :** Jazz desperately needs rejuvenation and ideas bubbling up from the new generation of players, and bassist-vocalist-conceptualist Spalding qualifies as one of this season’s hottest and most innovative properties in that department. Her rightfully hosanna-ed debut album, with her acoustic trio, opens with **Jimmy Rowles**’s “The Peacocks” but then heads creatively hither and yon, touching on tunes by **Egberto Gismonti** and **Chick Corea**, and originals by a new original on the scene. Stay tuned to this one.

**The James Moody and Hank Jones Quartet, Our Delight (Ipo) :** From the opposite end of the generational scale, two of jazz’s most active and revered post-80-year-olds team up for one of the year’s more inspiring mainstream dates. The understated but plainly ingenious piano great Jones (b. 1918) makes sweet and empathetic music with tenor saxist Moody (b. 1925)—whom we heard as a special guest at the Solvang Jazz Festival in September. Drummer **Adam Nussbaum** and bassist **Todd Coleman** round out the foursome, which pays lively respects to old standards and several **Tad Dameron** gems. A warm and wonderful encounter.

**Marcin Wasilewski, January (ECM) :** ECM records has long been a go-to forum for some of the world’s greatest jazz pianists, with **Keith Jarrett** in the uppermost echelon and including Swedish great **Bobo Stenson**. This year’s “new” sensation is Polish pianist Marcin Wasilewski. In fact, his breathing, listening trio with bassist **Slawomir Kurkiewicz** and drummer **Michal Miskiewicz** has long been around, backing noted Polish trumpeter **Thomas Stańko**, but the pianist makes a dazzling impression as a leader here, with expressivity, elasticity, lyricism, and wit in flowing doses. Musing “ECM-ish” ballads, the agreeable romanticism of **Ennio Morricone**’s Cinema Paradiso and the angular sit of **Gary Peacock**’s “Vignette” and **Carla Bley**’s “King Korn” supply the pianist with much to venture forth on, with an assured, but never smug, wise and exploratory voice. To boot, it’s one of those great rainy day discs, a warm aural bath to slip into by the fireplace, in January, or December.

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