

# JAZZIZ<sup>®</sup>

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course, MacArthur accumulated more than just stamps on his passport, as he connected with some of the biggest names in contemporary jazz along the way. Some of those artists — trumpeter Rick Braun, keyboardist Jeff Lorber and guitarist Jeff Golub, among them — show their esteem for the Rochester, New York-born saxophonist by contributing to his latest recording *Feels Like Home* (Paradise Point Music). On the album's title ballad, included



here, MacArthur's meaty, Sanborn-esque phrasing is supported by Ron Reinhardt's wistful piano and an agile rhythm section of bassist Bromberg, drummer Frank "Third" Richardson and percussionist Alex Acuña, who sensitively follow the shifting moods of the piece. The playing is as solid and accomplished as one might expect from such a team, and MacArthur satisfyingly melds contemporary flare with classic-jazz inspiration.

The fifth studio recording by the **Hristo Vitchev Quartet**, *Familiar Fields* (First Orbit Sounds), displays the continuing



## Disc 2

- 01 **George Duke** "Stones of Orion"  
*DreamWeaver* (Concord)
- 02 **Inbar Fridman** "Dark Song for a Clear Day"  
*Time Quartet Project* (Origin)
- 03 **Bobby McFerrin** feat. *Esperanza Spalding*  
"Every Time" *Spirityouall* (Sony)
- 04 **John Serry** "Pockets"  
*The Shift* (SPCo)
- 05 **Mike MacArthur** "Feels Like Home"  
*Feels Like Home* (Paradise Point Music)
- 06 **Hristo Vitchev** "They Are No More"  
*Familiar Fields* (First Orbit Sounds)
- 07 **Terence Blanchard** "Magnetic"  
*Magnetic* (Blue Note)
- 08 **Doug Robinson** "Tu y Yo No Más"  
*Solo/Piano* (Act As If Music)
- 09 **Mark Egan/Karl Latham/John Hart**  
"Old Folks" *Unit 1* (Wavetone)
- 10 **Chuck Owen & The Jazz Surge**  
"Side Hikes — A Ridge Away"  
*River Runs* (Summit/MAMA)



Music can convey a sense of place quite effectively, particularly if the musicians are inspired by their surroundings. This seems to be the case with **Inbar Fridman** and her collaborators on her recording *Time Quartet Project* (Origin). The Israeli-born guitarist and her French-based colleagues — pianist Camelia Ben Naceur, bassist Laurent Chavoit and drummer Stefano Lucchini — convened in a studio at the foot of the Pyrénées to craft the lush soundscapes for the album. "Surrounded by the vast plains of the countryside and pampered with sugar corn crepes made by Camelia's dad, it was just so easy to go in the studio and make music," Fridman writes in the album's liner notes. And that's certainly borne out on tracks such as the opening "Dark Song for a Clear Day," our selection, which could have been titled just the opposite. Fridman's chiming, Metheny-esque leads are subdued but brightly voiced, as they pleasantly traverse a winding rhythmic pathway laid down by Chavoit and Lucchini. As throughout, she could hardly ask for better company than Ben Naceur's lyrical, unfussy piano.



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evolution of the ensemble's sound and Vitchev's evocative compositions. "Naturally, the sound hues and tonal direction of the band kept expanding over time," the



Bulgarian-born, Bay Area-based guitarist writes in the album's liner notes, revealing that he had written most of the material during the past five years. "And, towards the end of 2012, finally something told me the time was right to put all this material on tape." With longtime colleagues Weber Iago on piano and Dan Robbins on bass, and exceptional drummer Mike Shannon joining the fold, Vitchev paints a vivid pastoral landscape with epic sweep, often recalling the big-sky sound of Pat Metheny. On the elegiac "They Are No More," our selection, Iago opens the song with a melancholy solo that slowly unfolds like a flower as his band mates sensitively add their own contributions. Vitchev echoes Weber's melodic line before breaking into his own expressive statement, while Robbins' hushed resonance and Shannon's whispering brushes provide shiver-inducing accompaniment. Obviously, these musicians are more than comfortable with one another, as one delicate solo seamlessly segues into another.

As a music-loving kid growing up in San Diego, pianist and composer **Doug Robinson** fell into jazz almost by accident. The 12-year-old Robinson hadn't really played jazz until a young bassist named Nathan East asked him to fill in on a gig. When he asked bandleader Hollis Gentry III what he should play, Gentry gave him



The elastic-voiced **Bobby McFerrin** truly returns to his roots with his latest release, *Spirityouall* (Sony Masterworks). An engaging collection of gospel favorites done up in various ways — from jazz to blues to Americana — the Gil Goldstein-produced album pays homage to the singer's father, Robert McFerrin Sr., the first African-American member of the Metropolitan Opera Company, who was renowned for his powerful renditions of Negro spirituals. McFerrin's playful approach and wizardly command of his instrument may differ dramatically from his dad's baritone delivery, but they hardly negate the content of these songs, some of which he wrote for the occasion. The collection's joyful tone is set from the opening "Everytime," our selection and one of



three spirituals the elder McFerrin also recorded in 1957. Acoustic-guitar accompaniment and an airy rhythm section provide plenty of room for the singer and his vocal collaborator, Esperanza Spalding, to doodle atop the simple lyric. With versatile backing from multi-instrumentalist Larry Campbell, accordionist and keyboardist Goldstein, bassist Larry Grenadier, drummers Ali Jackson and Charley Drayton, and Spalding, who joins him on four numbers, McFerrin once again crafts a heartfelt work of art.

the directive that's guided his creative career ever since: "Hey, this is jazz. All you have to do is play what you feel." While Robinson, who's lived in Mexico for a decade, has technical facility to spare, feeling is primary in his music, particularly as heard on the deeply personal-sounding release *Solo/Piano* (Act As If Music). Recorded almost entirely unaccompanied — one tune is a bluesy duet with guitarist Ken Basman — the tracks brim with emotion, inspired by the events of his life, from the most joyous to the most devastating. The heartbreaking "Tu y Yo No Más" (You and I No More), included here, seems all the more poignant with the knowledge that Robinson recently split from his wife. Yet the album is hardly gloomy, as

the pianist, who lived for years in San Miguel de Allende, has started over in San Pancho, Nayarit. Apparently, he's hit the ground running, with the *Solo/Piano* album and the ensemble recording *Love All Ways*.

With his liquid lines, thoughtful phrasing and oceanic tone, fretless bassist **Mark Egan** has been a primary voice of jazz fusion for decades. On his latest release, *Unit 1* (Wavetone), Egan teams up with guitarist John Hart and drummer Karl Latham on sessions that were recorded

