

ECM INFORMATION

WWW.JAZZJOURNAL.CO.UK

May 18th, 2026



**Reviewed: Elina Duni, Rob Luft | Ahmad Jamal |
Jon Henriksson | Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra &
Sean Irvine**

Elina Duni, Rob Luft: Reaching For The Moon | Ahmad Jamal: At
The Jazz Showcase, Live In Chicago | Jon Henriksson:
Shapeshifter | Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra & Sean Irvine: Forgotten
Stories Suite

by Simon Adams

Elina Duni, Rob Luft: Reaching For The Moon

Albanian-born singer Elina Duni is now on her sixth ECM recording, her third with British guitarist Rob Luft, this time just as a duo. As before, she draws on a wide variety of languages and genres, covering such songs as a traditional piece from Kosovo, a Persian lullaby, an Italian ballad, Gabriel Fauré's art song *Les Berceaux*, a film-music segue between a Japanese theme and an unsettling Krzysztof Komeda song from Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*, all bookended by Irving Berlin's title song and Ornette's Coleman's *Lonely Woman*. There is logic behind this variety, for as Duni remarks, "different styles and different languages bridge the gap between people."

Not that this diffuse material works against her, for it is in her continuity of style that Duni is so commanding. She is sparse and haunting on Berlin's title track, as she embellishes the melody and underlines the meaning of the lyrics, and is equally poised and effective on *Cammina Cammina* by the Italian Pino Daniele and on *Les Berceaux*. The Persian lullaby *Leili Lullaby* is neatly effective in its beaten drum accompaniment and lilting guitar solo. The simplicity of all the arrangements, without the flugelhorn and drums of their previous quartet, makes all the songs more intimate, their own three joint compositions – all love songs pitched between jazz, folk, and chanson – introducing some necessary modern contrasts to what is predominately a traditional or standard set. Throughout, Luft drifts mellifluously as he underlines the emotional expression of each song and enhances its atmosphere, his tone- and pitch- perfect contributions adding considerable heft to every track.

The concluding and ever-so-slow *Lonely Woman* sums up the strengths of this fine set perfectly, the added lyrics by Margo Guryan enhancing Coleman's fine melody to create a personal song of love and longing beautifully sung by Duni and caressed by Luft. Just perfect.

Discography

Reaching For The Moon; *Cammina Cammina*; *Les Berceaux*; *Ani More Nuse*; *Foolish Flame*; *Leili Lullaby*; *Zambaku I Prizrenit*; *Yumeji's Theme/Sleep Soft And Warm*; *Magnolia*; *Yours Arms*; *Lonely Woman* (46.44)
Duni (v, pc); Luft (elg, elec). Pernes-les-Fontaines, France, June 2025.
ECM 2866

Ahmad Jamal: At The Jazz Showcase, Live In Chicago

In March 1976 Ahmad Jamal and his trio performed at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago, the recording of that gig now making its first appearance. Jamal had played with drummer Frank Gant since 1966, but bassist John Heard was a more recent acquisition. Jamal himself had changed and evolved, too: the Tatum-level technique, Cole-derived swing, Garneresque flourishes and of

course his own wonderful touch and ingenious use of space remained, but these were now augmented by some lessons learned from his own adoption of the electric piano, although this set is totally acoustic: he now fills in many of the spaces Miles Davis admired for him leaving open, vivid flourishes and all. Everything Jamal plays here is beautifully delivered, but without the restraints of short recording times, he often returns to the melody and lives inside it for a long time. And he does so by taking the lead: you barely hear from anyone else on this recording.

As for the songs themselves, a rapturous impressionistic opening introduces the near 15-minute Ahmad's Song, a florid piece that shows Jamal's command of classical music. Jobim's bossa-nova standard Wave is taken at a slower pace than his previous treatment of the song in 1970 and dances along gracefully. A bossa-nova feel continues into the meeting with Miss Jones, which amusingly makes good use of the catchy hook of KC and the Sunshine Band's That's The Way (I Like It) released the previous year, while Johnny Mandel's Theme From M*A*S*H is suitably dramatic. Jamal's treatment of Herbie Hancock's Dolphin Dance retains the mid-tempo pace of the original but references Hancock's later fusion style, while both standards reveal Jamal's debt to Garner. Best of all is the concluding 21-minute Swahililand, a Jamal composition previewed in 1974 which manages to combine a whirl of profound pianisms alongside references to the English carol God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen.

This recent addition to Jamal's extensive catalogue is not as cool and minimal as previous live recordings, and is certainly more florid, but, as far as I'm concerned, every live Jamal set is a joy to listen to.

Discography

CD1: Ahmad's Song; Wave; Have You Met Miss Jones; Theme From M*A*S*H (50.06)

CD2: Dolphin Dance; Prelude To A Kiss; A Time For Love; Swahililand; A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square (52.24)

Jamal (p); John Heard (b); Frank Gant (d). Live, Jazz Showcase, Chicago, 20–21 March 1976.

Resonance Records HCD-2085

Jon Henriksson: Shapeshifter

Stockholm-based composer and bassist Jon Henriksson's latest set is built around a core quartet of tenor sax, piano, bass and drums expanded by a guitar on three tracks and a trombone on two. While it was originally conceived as quartet album, the additional instrumental colours of guitar and trombone were introduced organically as the music required. Of the quartet, pianist Rasmus Sørensen and drummer Jonas Bäckman are long-term Henriksson collaborators, while saxophonist Karl-Martin Almqvist is a member of the

Danish Radio Big Band. Such musical closeness helps the group to cohere, notably on the opening Toninho, a tribute to Brazilian guitarist and composer Toninho Horta that sits easily within the album's contemporary jazz framework. Pianist Sørensen stands out for his confident solos, as does trombonist Rasmus Holm, while the leader is always interesting although often reticent. Overall, what catches the attention most is the coherent and contrasting musical ideas that develop and evolve naturally rather than by direct command. Each piece is shaped by the musicians' own intuition and responsiveness, with space, pacing and interaction the key ingredients. What results is a strong album that highlights Henriksson's growing assurance as a composer and bandleader.

Discography

Toninho; Shapeshifter; Grönbete; Saga Nomri Ngen; Monkurt; Olikheter; Chime Blues; Ses Vid Horisonten (45.44)

Henriksson (b, v); Rasmus Sørensen (p); Karl-Martin Almqvist (ts); Rasmus Holm (tb, btb); Pelle Von Bulow (g); Jonas Bäckman (d). Copenhagen, 3–4 June 2025.

April Records APR164CD

Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra & Sean Irvine: Forgotten Stories Suite

The ninth album from the Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra is a brave statement, a 10-track concept album that depicts the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals navigating identity, trauma and healing. The suite was composed by multi-instrumentalist Sean Irvine and is led by spoken word narrator Quinn Greene, who relates the five personal narratives, and singer Karly Epp. So far, so important, but does it all cohere, does it actually work as a suite? For me, regrettably, the direct answer is no, for while the jazz setting is strong and the soloists commanding, the spoken narratives are, in contrast, too episodic and too personal, distancing them from the music that surrounds them. A good try, but I'm not convinced.

Discography

Forgotten Stories; Prologue: Studies In Shades Of Palo Santo; 2 Brothers; Movement 1; Nightmare; Longing For Texas; Movement II: Texas; A King & His Castle; Movement III: A Perfect Castle; May He Rest; Movement IV: Harold (51.56)

Irvine (ss, as, pic, f, cl, bcl); Quinn Greene, Karly Epp (v); Shane Hicks, Matthew Walden, Andrew Littleford, Jon Challoner (t, flh); Joel Green, Jeremy Duggleby, Kevin Carlson (tb); Isabelle Lavoie (btb); Neil Watson (ss, as); Niall Cade, Monica Jones (ts); Kyle Wedlake (bs); Larry Roy (g); Will Bonness (p, elp); Karl Kohut (b, elb); Fabio Ragnelli (d); Richard Giles (con). Live, Winnipeg, Manitoba, December 2024.

Chronograph Records CR-118

<https://jazzjournal.co.uk/2026/05/18/reviewed-elina-duni-rob-luft-ahmad-jamal-jon-henriksson-winnipeg-jazz-orchestra-sean-irvine/>