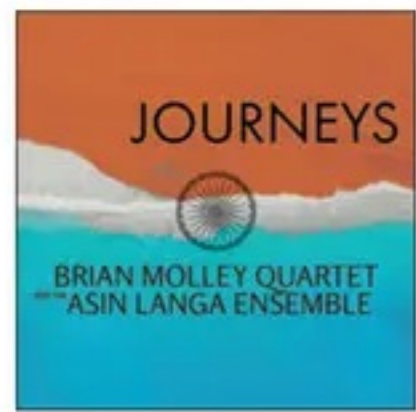


## Brian Molley Quartet and the Asin Langa Ensemble Journeys

BGMM BGMM005 (CD, DL) ★★★

Brian Molley (s), Asin Khan Langa (sarangi), Tom Gibbs (p), Bhungar Khan (khardtal), James Lindsay (b), Sadiq Khan (dholak), Stuart Brown (d) and Latif Khan (bhangang, morchang).  
Rec. date not stated



Zakir Hussein, L Shankar and John McLaughlin set a high bar for Indo-jazz fusion

with their compelling Shakti project. But now here comes Glasgow-based saxophonist Brian Molley, gorgeous of tone and sparing of note, and his longtime quartet on piano, double bass and drums, with an album recorded in a desert studio in the middle of western Rajasthan, that colourful Indian state with its camels, mirrored wall hangings and pink stone castles. It was Jodhpur's annual Rajasthan International Folk Festival (RIFF), at which BMQ first performed in 2015, which paired the questing Scottish outfit and their penchant for everything from dynamic straight-ahead jazz to traditional Scottish folk to driving Indian ragas with award-winning Sufi singer and (three-string) sarangi player Asin Langa and his ensemble, which, given the latter's collaborations with composer-producer AR Rahman and Australian singer/guitarist Jeff Lang, make sense.

*Journeys*, then, is a fine slice of Indo-Scottish jazz, accessible here, experimental there; opener 'Cottonopilis/Dhologee' melds influences from the indie Manchester with the drum-driven songs of northern India in ways unified and propulsive. 'Kama', a stand-out, is a traditional Indian tune that finds Molley alone on saxophone, vying with Lang's

keeping sarangi - and with the khardtal, a pair of wooden slats clicked together in rhythm, and one of the oldest percussion instruments in the world.

Jane Cornwell

## John-Paul Muir featuring Brigitte Beraha Home Now

Ubuntu Music UBU0178 (CD, DL)

★★★★

John-Paul Muir (p), George Crowley (bcl, ts), Jakub Cywinski (b), Eric Ford (d) and Brigitte Beraha (v). Rec. 9 October 2023



Beauty distilled: from the opening intimacy of 'Sunlight', you know *Home Now*

is special. Anjali Bhat's disarmingly transparent lyrics celebrate the splendoured joys of a kiss while Beraha's ecstatic voice, Muir's Ravel rich piano, all pepped by Crowley's sonorous bass clarinet flow together to create a gorgeous if not quite unique sound.

Because, as Muir happily admits, he's heavily influenced by Norma Winstone's trio with Gesing and Venier. But why not aim for the best? Bhat's lyrics are not as elusive or dark as Winstone's, there's always a skip of joy there somewhere. Yes, there's sadness in the title track but even as it questions where and what is home, there's still a wonder at cities coming to life, at the spirit of people to grasp life even as it slips through their fingers.

And Beraha's diction is nearer to Luciana Souza's, as cool as it is sensual, as crystalline in structure as it is suddenly empowered to freely scat. As for Muir, his deep classical training underlines his impressionistic playing. He suggests more than he directs; he owns his authority even as he raises questions and opens doors, especially on cuts like 'Balm'.

Soothing, but never soppy, *Home Now* is a release of rare pleasures.

Andy Robson

## Kjetil Mulelid Trio And Now

Grappa GRCD4816 (CD, DL) ★★★

Kjetil Mulelid (p), Rune Nergaard (b) and Andreas Winther (d). Rec. 8 February 2024



This is the fourth album by Mulelid's trio, the previous three

albums on Rune Grammofon. Their debut from 2017, *Not Nearly Enough to Buy a House*, when the leader was 26, gets full marks for social commentary but suggested there was still a way to go in melodic development, harmonic astuteness and compositional skills. Even so, it nevertheless suggested potential. He is now 35 and whether that potential has been realised remains moot since not much progress seems to have been made in these areas. He still

sounds as if he's playing for himself, or to put his kids to sleep. *And Now* just about registers 'good', but the feeling lingers that in the middle of some songs here you could go out to the kitchen, make a cup of tea, and on your return his rather meandering improvisations would still be going round and round in the same cul-de-sac getting nowhere.

Stuart Nicholson

## Jim Mullen Quartet For Heaven's Sake

Stunt STUCD 24012 (CD, DL) ★★★★★

Jim Mullen (g), Ben Paterson (org), Jan Harbeck (ts) and Kristian Leth (d).  
Rec. 14-15 October 2023



Our man Mullen apparently knows Copenhagen well, having played there regularly,

often at the instigation of Danish drummer Leth. This time Leth teamed him with organist

## Iúri Oliveira Manifesto

Respirar de Ouvido/Bandcamp (LP, DL) ★★★★★

Iúri Oliveira (perc, spoken word, prod). Rec. 2024



At last year's Festa Do Jazz in Lisbon percussionist Iúri Oliveira stood out in Duarte Ventura's ensemble, arguably the best group of the three-day event. A composer and arranger in his own right, Oliveira is no less impressive on this highly imaginative album, which adds to the lineage of virtuoso performances of solo drums in black music.

First and foremost the immensely wide sonic range of the material reflects the orchestral dimension of African rhythms by dint of the variety of instruments deployed, from the lowest bass to the highest soprano and enchanting tuned percussion in the mid range. Oliveira is particularly adept at evoking specific environments, be it the bottom of a well or the hollow of a tree, and his use of space and silence in relation to a carefully chosen conga phrase, jangle of shells, distant bird whistle or starkly reverberating bell is superb. The tracks on the album are vividly cinematic, occasionally interspersed with short monologues, but they also become highly danceable as soon as Oliveira introduces a sensual, side-winding 6/8. When Max Roach declared that the drum also waltzes in the 1950s he hailed the sophistication of rhythm beyond timekeeping that was prevalent in jazz, African and Afro-Brazilian music.

Oliveira stands in that heritage, along with luminaries such as Nana Vasconceles, Airto Moreira, Trilok Gurtu, Doudou Ndiaye Rose and Guem insofar as he is able to create complex narratives that are as non-metrical as they are metrical, tumbling into abstraction and metaphor as much as they settle into pulsating groove. *Manifesto* is indeed a statement of artistic intent, but Oliveira's ambitious, wide-ranging music also turns a revelatory spotlight on Afro-Portuguese culture. **Kevin Le Gendre**



Kjetil Mulelid Trio

