



The Company Vocalists Keep

It's not a bad strategy to assess singers by the company they keep: The strongest singers are, not surprisingly, often accompanied by the best players.

Sinne Eeg, *Dreams* (ArtistShare 0153; 46:59 ★★★★★½): Learn to say this name: It's pronounced "Seen-uh Eeg." The Danish jazz singer, an established star in Europe, checks all the boxes; burnished tone, perfect intonation, swing, unerring taste and an adventurous streak. She is a complete musician who, remarkably, also has a gift for interpreting lyrics in a natural, conversational way. On the fan-funded *Dreams*, she surrounded herself with a dream team: Larry Koonse on guitar, Scott Colley on bass, Joey Baron on drums and Danish pianist Jacob Christoffersen.

Ordering info: artistsshare.com

Rondi Charleston, *Resilience* (Resilience Music Alliance; 44:28 ★★★★★½): Charleston displays a pleasing, flexible alto that she wields with authority. Occasionally straddling the line between cabaret and jazz singing, she proves she belongs in the latter category with assured recitations of Clifford Brown's "Joy Spring" and Harold Arlen's "I've Got The World On A String," both featuring typically fine solos by guitarist and musical director Dave Stryker. Charleston gets excellent musical support from pianist Brandon McCune, bassist Ed Howard, drummer McClenty Hunter and percussionist Mayra Casales; Tim Ries and Alex Norris contribute strong horn solos.

Ordering info: resiliencemusic.com

Diana Panton, *Solstice/Equinox* (Self Release, 64:46 ★★★★★½): The genteel soul of pianist George Shearing infuses this silky collection of songs about the seasons, which Panton sings with a breathy delicacy that recalls Blossom Dearie and Stacey Kent. But she's got her own

thing, giving classic songs like "They Say It's Spring" and "September In The Rain" a literate, sensitive reading, while allowing generous solo opportunities for her first-rate Canadian ensemble.

Ordering info: dianapanton.com

Alma Micic, *That Old Feeling* (Whaling City Sound 099; 33:39 ★★★★★½): This Serbian émigré, who now calls New York home, has absorbed the influence of classic jazz singers to such a degree that you'd never guess her Eastern European heritage. She's abetted by judicious, spare accompaniment from guitarist/husband Rale Micic, vibraphonist Tom Beckham, bassist Corcoran Holt and drummer Johnathan Blake.

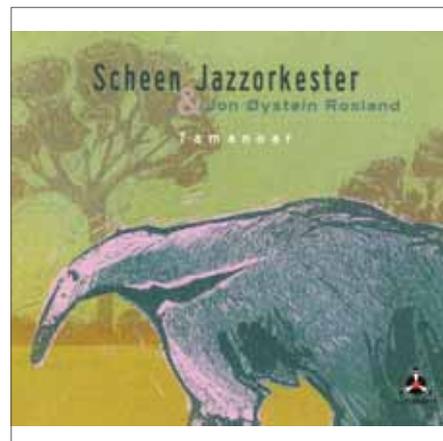
Ordering info: whalingcitysound.com

Randy Porter Trio with Nancy King, *Porter Plays Porter* (Heavywood Music; 41:57 ★★★★★): Unlike the other albums discussed in this column, the singer here is listed as a "special guest." This is really the Oregon-based pianist Randy Porter's album, and he delivers the goods. His modern interpretations of eight Porter classics (plus one worthy Randy Porter original) are dazzlingly accomplished. Nancy King's singing is inventive, but sometimes strenuously so, leaving me longing for the original melody.

Ordering info: randyporter.com

Low-Fly Quintet, *Stop For A While* (Losen Records 188; 38:05 ★★★★★½): This Norwegian group, a piano trio plus cello backing vocalist Camilla Tømta, is going for a modern take on a bluesy '30s sound. Tømta brings good intonation and charisma, as well as a background in gospel, blues and pop. Her own songs tend toward the slow, sad and slightly off-kilter, but could use more polish. Although the album doesn't quite gel, the group shows its potential in appealing takes on vintage songs. **DB**

Ordering info: losenrecords.no



Scheen Jazzorkester & Jon Øystein Rosland *Tamanoar*

LOSEN RECORDS 177

★★★★½

In 1985, the Vienna Art Orchestra had an album called *Perpetuum Mobile*. This title would have befitted this new recording by the Scheen Jazzorkester, a 12-piece band led by Norwegian saxophonist Jon Øystein Rosland that owes as much to classical orchestral music as to jazz. Throughout, there is a sense of constant motion that is generated by shifts that unfailingly occur in quick succession.

Throughout the tapestry woven by Rosland, solos occur organically and not out of obligation or convention. The most significant ones are the product of trumpeter Thomas Johansson, arguably the busiest member of the band. In all cases, they never overstay their welcome. As a result, *Tamanoar* is truly a group effort where collective performance is privileged over individual prowess.

Rosland's arranging talents contribute largely to the cohesiveness of the ensemble and illustrate this approach. The colorful voicings bring out the pieces' inner beauty with the extensive use of countermelodies and tonal contrasts. Pastoral moods are favored and only on rare instances do the synthesizer or the drums disrupt the melodious output.

The main operational mode also has its shortcomings. It is music that will appeal to those with short attention spans, but it might frustrate others who would have liked to hear further developments. On the other hand, it might be an encouragement to go back often to those multifaceted compositions.

—Alain Drouot

Tamanoar: Snake Oil; Oppidum; Lost In Lemuria I; Sjarlatan; Latroductus; Lost In Lemuria II; Habitable; Wabi Sabi; Lost In Lemuria II; Tamanoar. (50:51)

Personnel: André Kassen, soprano saxophone; Børge-Are Halvorsen, flutes, alto saxophone; Jon Øystein Rosland, tenor saxophone; Line Bjørnør Rosland, bass clarinet; Finn Arne Dahl Hanssen, Thomas Johansson, trumpet; Benedikte Follegg Hol, Magne Rutle, trombone; Asgeir Grong, bass trombone; Rune Klakegg, piano, synth, accordion; Jan Olav Renvåg, bass; Audun Kleive, drums.

Ordering info: losenrecords.no