

## Impressive Vitality, Variety

Saxophonist **Adam Kolker** originally conceived his new album, **Lost (Sunnyside 1593; 41:39 ★★★)**, as a collection of Wayne Shorter tunes. But as he formulated the effort, he realized the homage didn't need to be so explicit. The premise still is steeped in Shorter's sound world, and it shines through whether on standards, originals or craftily reimagined classics by his idol, like the molasses-slow take of "Dance Cadaverous." Supported by the excellent cast of pianist Bruce Barth, bassist Ugonna Okegwo and drummer Billy Hart, the bandleader finds new angles within Shorter's exemplary modal approach, although his own writing and arranging bring plenty to the table. His smoldering reharmonization of "Darn That Dream" applies Shorter's brooding sensibility with a touch of John Coltrane, while the leader's own "Flips" arrives as an origami exercise based on Thelonious Monk's "Evidence." On the quartet's version of "The Time Of The Baracuddas (General Assembly)," itself a Shorter revamp of a Gil Evans tune, Kolker goes straight for the jugular, uncorking a slashing tenor improvisation, leaving his agile band to sketch out contours and harmony.

Ordering info: [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)

In 2016, German saxophonist **Nicole Johäntgen** met New York guitarist **Jack DeSalvo** (who played in one of Ronald Shannon Jackson's late bands) when they were both working in Matt Lavelle's 12 Houses Orchestra. They recorded the duet collection **Lumens (Unseen Rain 9925; 48:50 ★★)** soon after. The material includes fully improvised pieces and some occasionally schmaltzy balladry (her "Es Guete Morge Lied" sounds like a cloying children's song), and the pair clearly established a quick rapport together. DeSalvo's harmony is spiked with bits of bossa nova here and there, but his conception is pure jazz, comping, accenting and prodding Johäntgen's watery lines on both alto and soprano. Yet, even when the duo veers toward abstraction and dissonance, it all feels a bit too treacly and monochromatic.

Ordering info: [unseenrainrecords.bandcamp.com](http://unseenrainrecords.bandcamp.com)

Named for an oceanographic term referring to the celestial impact on tides, **Harmonic Constituent (Playscape 081119; 78:06 ★★★★★)** by reedist **Jason Robinson** features music he composed during a 2018 residency in Northern California's Mendocino Country, during which he observed and was inspired by particular facets of the area's dynamic coastline. His brief liner-note essay deliberately refrains from providing specific details, but the music still bristles with vitality



François Houle

GENEVIÈVE MONROE

and variety without much context, deftly conveying the awesome splendor and power of nature. Leading a fantastic band—pianist Joshua White, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Ches Smith—the pieces toggle between varied approaches, whether the brief, collectively improvised meditation of "Phase 2," the Coltrane-ish balladry of the tender "Jug Handle" or declamatory, feverish post-bop vehicles like "Seventh Wave." The leader wisely carves out space for his cohort, both on short improvised interludes and rigorous compositions, mirroring the balance of the tangible and the ineffable beauty of his geographic muse.

Ordering info: [playscape-recordings.com](http://playscape-recordings.com)

Bassist Mark Helias and drummer Gerry Hemingway have worked together for years with trombonist Ray Anderson in the brawny BassDrumBone, but they impart an impressive spaciousness on **Recorder (Songlines 1632; 53:57 ★★★★★)**, a spiky quartet date led by Vancouver clarinetist **François Houle** alongside his frequent collaborator, guitarist Gordon Grdina. Those latter two play off one another with constant invention—recalling the blend that Don Byron achieved with Bill Frisell on his 1992 album *Tuskegee Experiments*—as they forge stinging counterpoint on "The Black Bird" or meld into a single glowing timbre on "Bowen." But it's the rhythm section that gives the music its elastic lift, even when the leader's writing reflects the chamber-like vibe of Jimmy Giuffrè's trio with Paul Bley and Steve Swallow. The album is broken up with a series of brief improvised interludes in which Helias picks up his original instrument, clarinet, to duet with Houle for moments that function as effective pauses between the leader's rigorous compositions. **DB**

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