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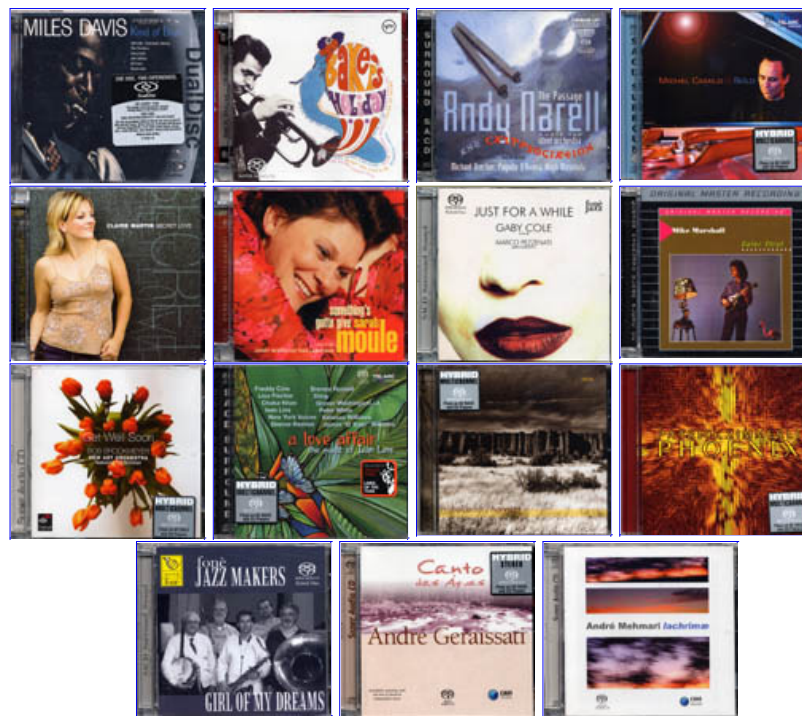
## AUDIOPHILE AUDITION

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March 2005, Pt. 1 of 3 - Hi-Res Jazz

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**Miles Davis - Kind of Blue (with Cannonball Adderley, Paul Chambers, Jimmy Cobb, John Coltrane, Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly)**  
Columbia/Legacy DualDisc CN 90887 \*\*\*\*\*:

This album has got to hold the record for having been rereleased more times in more different formats than any other. Wonder if it made 8-track, Elcaset and DCC? - probably. And don't forget half-speed-mastered, 16 2/3 rpm, 45 rpm or standard cassette. Still the best-selling jazz album in history, Kind of Blue sells about 5000 copies a week in the U.S. alone and just

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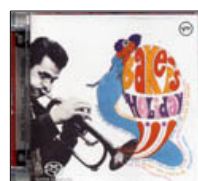
in 2004 sold ten million copies worldwide! Now is that a hit or what?

So what's the reason for yet another reissue? - we reviewed the excellent multichannel SACD release back in 2002 - <http://www.audaud.com/audaud/MAR02/HIRES/hires2MAR02.html> Well, as the top-selling jazz album it would be a natural to be selected for the first batch of the new DualDiscs regardless. It can be paired up with the one-hour film documentary *Made In Heaven*, on the making and impact of the *Kind of Blue* session, which has been available on DVD but not with the actual album. The video side also includes interviews with band members and a historic still photo gallery. In addition, the same side of the DualDisc containing the documentary film can also carry the surround sound mix of the album using Dolby Digital 5.1 for those users with standard DVD players but without either of the new hi-res playback options.

Now strictly speaking this DualDisc shouldn't be in our Hi-Res section because the audio side is neither DVD-A nor SACD but just standard CD. It's understandable that Sony Music - the co-originators of DSD/SACD - were not about to include a competing DVD-Audio option on the audio-only side of the DualDisc. But neither did they include a hybrid SACD. I am told that the reason for this is that the DualDisc is already slightly thicker than the Red Book specs (which has caused hangups in certain players) and adding the layers required for a hybrid CD side would make it even thicker - sure to cause serious problems and returns. Perhaps it could be done for SACD-only, but now that Sony Music finally has the facilities to press all hybrid discs it surely doesn't want to return to the embarrassment of issuing SACDs that refuse to play on regular CD players.

Some further notes on content: The Audio Side includes the nine-minute alternate take of *Flamenco Sketches* just as did the other recent reissues. The documentary film is black & white. One of the interesting sections is a demo by Herbie Hancock of the centerpiece of the session, *So What*. Others appearing with reminiscences about the album include jazz critic Ira Gitler, Ed Bradley and Bill Cosby. There is also a section of audio outtakes from the master tapes titled *Miles Speaks*. The whole package is well worth having, and although the DD 5.1 mix doesn't come up to the clarity and transparency of the multichannel SACD it at least exposes many more listeners to the excitement and involvement of music in surround.

- John Henry



**Chet Baker - Baker's Holiday (Baker on Flugelhorn; Reeds: Alan Ross, Henry Freeman, Seldon Powell, Leon Cohen, Wilford Holcombe; Guitar: Everett Barksdale; Rhythm section: Hank Jones, Connie Kay, Richard Davis; Arrangements by Jimmy Mundy) - Verve stereo-only SACD B0003279-16, 26:07 \*\*\*1/2:**

Something of a surprise to find that Chet Baker did a Billie Holiday tribute album, and even more so when one hears Baker's vocals on tunes such as *Mean To Me*. Ira Gitler calls the album in his notes an unpretentious musical tribute, and that's true. But somehow it's just a bit odd to hear this voice that's so totally

different from Billie's doing her songs. At least he didn't attempt to tackle Strange Fruit. He does four vocals among the ten tunes here, but I preferred the instrumental versions. Baker's solos on his warm-sounding Flugelhorn are often very moving; the closing Don't Explain is especially lovely. Sound is good but not spectacular, and this is one of the shortest SACDs I've yet come across; guess there weren't any alternate tracks to be found.

- John Henry

\*\*\*\*\*MULTICHANNEL DISC OF THE MONTH\*\*\*\*\*



**Andy Narell, steel drums & Calypsociation - The Passage (Music for Steel Orchestra) with guests Michael brecker, Paquito D'Rivera, Hugh Masekela - Heads Up multichannel SACD HUSA 9086, \*\*\*\*\*:**

Narell is known for pioneering the role of steel drums in modern jazz. He has recorded 14 albums so far, and was the first non-Trinidadian to ever arrange music for the Panorama competitions there, where huge steelbands of 100 or more players rock the scene. In 2001 he traveled to Paris to teach at a steel drum school there called Calypsociation and was amazed at the seriousness and virtuosity of the students. Working together for two years they came up with the present repertory that he has recorded for Heads Up, fronting the 15 other performers playing 30 different pans, plus the three guest artists soloing - each on one track. All seven tunes are originals by Narell.

Steel drums have been audiophile material for a good long time. Audio pioneer Emory Cook traveled to Trinidad with his equipment in the early 50s and released his amazing stereo steel drum recordings on double-grooved LPs. They were made outdoors so the bass end was a bit lacking, but I recall on one you could clearly hear a cricket singing along with the pans. Andy Narell is familiar with all the studio technology, and has experimented with ways to record steel drums for maximum realism and impact. Some of his past recordings are favorites of audiophiles demoing their systems. But he complained that even his best efforts haven't completely captured the powerful bass end and clarity of the inner parts, making the end result rather thin-sounding compared to the smashing impact of the live steel band. And of course with only two channels it was impossible to convey the spatial relationships. Now with DSD and multichannel SACD he is afforded the opportunity to realize the ploy of some pan aficionados who walk inside the band to experience the unique sounds all around them. He put mics all around the band in a large studio space, then overdubbed each of the eight sections of the band on top of the live performance to get a clean stereo pair recording of each section. This gave him the elements he needed to create a mix putting the listener right there in front of the band in stereo, and right in the midst of the band in multichannel.

Calypsociation is a tight and swinging big band and with Narell's tunes they really wail. The three soloists add a nice touch, making the ensemble seem even more like a big band. Michael Brecker is the tenor saxist for Song for Mia, using the biguine rhythm. The track starts out very slowly at the beginning, with especially deep contrabass pans - what a great demo for subwoofers! if you don't

feel that physically your sub is wussy or your fullrange speakers are not really fullrange. And on this and all the tracks you are really completely surrounded by the 30 or so pans - what a feeling! The stereo mix doesn't come close. (By the way, like many Heads Up discs, this is an Enhanced CD, but once I finally got the CD video portion to come up on my Mac, I was disappointed at not finding a video of the band in action but only stills, a bio, a news release and promotions of other albums. The CD layer is also HDCD encoded.)

The album's closing track is Narell's award-winning composition for Panorama, Coffee Street. Running over 11 minutes, it's a veritable steel band symphony, with an amazing variety of different timbres and rhythms coming from those abandoned oil drums. I just heard them live at the Portland Jazz Festival and this SACD is a 100% improvement sonically. (I was some distance from the stage and I understand the PA audio levels were kept down and compressed since the concert was being taped for later NPR airing. First time at a jazz or rock concert I ever complained it wasn't loud enough!) This has to be the first time in the 63 years since some Trinidadians who couldn't possibly afford to buy musical instruments cut up and hammered out the lids of drums left behind by oil companies, that we have a recording which truly conveys the sonic impact of multi steel drums! Tracks: The Passage, Song for Mia, The Long Way Back, Sea of Stories, Mabouya, Dee Mwa Wee, Coffee Street.

- John Henry



**Michel Camilo, piano - Solo - Telarc multichannel SACD-63613, 61:31 \*\*\*\*\*:**

Camilo, hailing from the Dominican Republic, has become in the last decade or so an international jazz artist with many albums to his credit. None have been entirely solo piano before, though, which takes a special sort of confidence. He has done a number of other settings besides trio playing, but he wanted his solo album to be really special, and thus took his time conceptualizing it. What he came up with was a three-way balance of materials: Brazilian music, jazz standards, and his own originals. He got deeply into Brazilian music thru playing in Paquito D'Rivera's band and knowing vocalist Tania Maria. While he does Quiet Nights, he also delves into another couple of less-well-known Brazilian tunes. Gershwin is one of his primary jazz standards, and his treatment of two of the composer's great songs are included. Camilo's originals are a kick, especially The Frim Fram Sauce. He is not one of those less-is-more keyboardists a la Count Basie; Camilo plays the entire piano and then some. He confesses to deliberately start the album out quietly and then once the listener is with him, taking them on a wild ride.

While it would seem the differences between the stereo and multichannel playbacks of solo piano would be minimal, nothing could be further from the fact. If you have a multichannel setup, try it and you'll quickly see. Tracks; A dream, All Mine, Our Love Is Here To Stay, Reflections, Luiza, 'Round Midnight, Atras Da Porta, Someone to Watch Over Me, Un Son, The Frim Fram Sauce, Quiet Nights, Suntan.

- John Henry



**Claire Martin – Secret Love / with Gareth Williams, piano; Laurence Cottle, bass; Clark Tracey, drums; Nigel Hitchcock, saxes; many others / Linn AKD 246 – Multichannel Hybrid SACD \* \* \*:**

Where to start, where to start – have you ever waited for a favorite artist's new album with rapt anticipation and excitement of the heady rush you know you're going to experience – only to be disappointed upon hearing it that it didn't knock your socks off? I'm in that unfortunate position at this very moment – I've listened to this album at least ten times in the last couple of weeks or so, and let's face it – I'm just a little underwhelmed, though not from lack of effort.

When Claire Martin's last album, *Too Darn Hot*, appeared on my doorstep, the disc arrived damaged, and after protracted unsuccessful efforts to get it to play at all and having to request a new promo copy from Linn – when the disc finally spun on my system for the first time, I was shocked by the impression it made on me. The powerful, propulsively driving opening tune, a really excellent mixture of ballads, blues and uptempo numbers, and the album's amazing centerpiece – *Black Coffee* – which knocked an upper-deck home run right out of my ballpark! The disc just blazed on all cylinders, and I waxed poetic in these very pages about what a sterling impression it made on me – and still does every time I play it – which is often.

The excitement that disc generated is regrettably absent on *Secret Love*, her newest release. Don't get me wrong – this disc delivers some really excellent songs, and much in the same vein as *Too Darn Hot* – only minus the sweltering heat that was in evidence throughout that excellent release. Just listen to *Too Darn Hot's* *Black Coffee* – where Claire shows about eight ranges of emotion in her vocals – and you'll know exactly what I'm talkin' about. That very emotion which was clearly evident throughout the previous disc is in scant supply on *Secret Love*.

The production qualities are stellar on this disc – take a listen to *Where Do You Start*, where Claire is accompanied by only electric guitar to stunning effect, or *Something Cool*, where Richard Rodney Bennett accompanies her lovingly on piano – these tracks are near demonstration quality. But much of this album has a lightweight feel to it, possibly owing to the absence of bassist Geoff Gascoyne, whose mastery of the instrument solidly anchored most of *Too Darn Hot*. Only on a couple of tunes here did I even notice that my subwoofer was working at all.

I almost feel the need to apologize for this review. But just look at any artist's follow-up to any big commercial or artistic success, and how often do they match that success with subsequent releases – not very often. Do you need this disc? Yes, even if you're only a casual fan, and definitely if you're a big fan, as I am.

Tracks: *Secret Love*; *But Beautiful*; *The Meaning of the Blues*; *Jive*; *Love is a Bore*; *Where Do You Start?*; *God Give Me Strength*; *Get Happy*; *My Buddy*; *Cheek to Cheek*; *Don't Misunderstand*; *Something Cool*.

-- Tom Gibbs



**Sarah Moule – Something's Gotta Give / with Simon Wallace, piano/keyboards; Mick Hutton, bass; Paul Robinson, drums; Pete Wareham, saxes; many others / Linn AKD 239 – Multichannel Hybrid SACD \* \* :**

This multichannel SACD from Linn is Sarah Moule's second disc for the label and collects songs from Johnny Mercer and Fran Landesman. The collection boasts a veritable hit parade from Johnny Mercer, but I honestly had only ever heard Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most from Fran Landesman. While the disc gets off to a really great start with an interesting bass intro to the title track, the album just never really gains any speed from there and I found it to be a tedious listen. The Mercer songs were definitely the highlight of this offering, but the versions here pale by comparison to anything from the Ella Fitzgerald songbook series – the Landesman songs, I found to be a bit too syrupy and overly sentimental. Something about Ms. Moule's voice just didn't seem to suit the song selection well – this is much traversed territory, and you'd better have something original to say, or that'll grab everyone's attention.

Sound quality was superb, as usual from Linn – I just couldn't keep focused on the music. Your mileage may vary, so try it if you can before you buy it.

Tracks: Something's Gotta Give; How Was It For You?; I'd Old Fashioned; Save the Photographs; That Old Black Magic; What Love Knows; Jeepers Creepers; The Days of Wine and Roses; Come Rain or Come Shine; Down; You're So Now; Travlin' Light; High Noon; Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most.

-- Tom Gibbs



**Gaby Cole – Just For A While - with Marco Pezzenati, percussion - Foné 010 SACD – Stereo Hybrid SACD \* \* \* :**

This new record from the Italian label Fone is one of those discs that's bound to inspire a love/hate feeling in just about anyone who hears it – yes, that's right, you're either gonna love it or quite likely hate every minute of it. Let's not rush to judgement – the odd choice of accompaniment (solo voice with percussion) should at least peak anyone's curiosity, anyway.

I couldn't really find out much of anything about the performers – I'd guess that vocalist Gaby Cole is of eastern European extraction, but that's based solely on her very heavy accent. Which is kind of enigmatic – at times she sounds almost Germanic, not unlike Ute Lemper, while at other points her near abandonment of harmonic structure in her singing/vocalizations leaves me baffled as to where she's coming from – quite literally. The instrumentation, which is entirely percussive in nature, has heavy emphasis on marimba, vibes, bell tree and bongos, and really suits the music and provides dramatic contrast to the vocals. The arrangements, vocals and accompaniment all give a really dark-hued cast to the collection of mostly show tunes and Tin Pan Alley songs. Percussionist Marco Pezzenati plays everything with delicacy and aplomb, lending a touch of mystery to the

proceedings – he especially shines on his solo take on Duke Ellington's Mood Indigo.

The disc is sourced from a PCM recording, and while it's not really super-audiophile material, it offers up a superb soundstage, and vocalist Gaby Cole is right there in the room with you all the way. The disc suffers from a touch of tape hiss; it didn't really get too much in the way of my enjoyment of the music. This record stands in really stark contrast to what one would normally expect considering the playlist – Fone should be complimented for have the wherewithal to bring it to market. My biggest complaint would probably be with the disc's scant 40-minute playing time, but hey, some of you might consider that a blessing. I'd definitely sample this one first, just to see if it's your cup of spicy tea – I really liked its brash unconventionality. Recommended.

Tracks: Summertime; The Man I Love; It's Only A Paper Moon; Mood Indigo; The Lady Is A Tramp; These Foolish Things; Lover Man; A Foggy Day; The Girl From Ipanema; I Got Rhythm; My Funny Valentine; Lover Come Back To Me; All Of Me.

-- Tom Gibbs



**Mike Marshall, mandolin, mandocello, mandola, violin, guitar - Gator Strut (with Darol Anger, David Grisman, Bela Fleck and Tony Rice) - Rounder/Mobile Fidelity Original Master stereo SACD UDSACD 7001\*\*\*\*:**

This 1984 original session had mandolinist Marshall pulling out all the stops to demonstrate his versatility on many different instruments, and in writing tunes (nearly all of them his own). He had plenty of assistance from other musician friends working in the SF Bay Area, plus some imported from elsewhere. The selection of tunes covers many bases, including folk, bluegrass, jazz, classical and something akin to David Grisman's "dawg music." Two classical surprises are a movement from Ravel's String Quartet in F and from the Bach Partita No. 3 for solo violin (played on mandolin). Good clean stereo reproduction.

Tracks: Dance of the Planktons, We Three, Gator Strut, Chief Sitting in the Rain, Assez Vif-tres Rythme (Ravel), Giant Hornpipe, Because, Scotch & Swing, Bach: Partita No. 3 in E (excerpt), Ybor City, 'Round Midnight, Gator's Dream, Wake Up, We Three (reprise).

- John Henry



**Bob Brookmeyer (trombone/conductor) and the New Art Orchestra featuring Till Brönner, guest solo trumpet - Get Well Soon - Challenge Jazz multichannel SACD SACHR70111 \*\*\*\*:**

This is the third disc for Brookmeyer's 18-member big band and the first to feature a promising trumpet player he found during a concert in Cologne, Germany. Brookmeyer titled the album for a friend recovering from cancer. Also "Elegy" was written for his friend composer Earle Brown who was dying at the time. It appears that Brookmeyer, like many other American jazz artists, has found it more satisfying to relocate to Europe. The arrangements are very enjoyable; this is a big band that never

blares. Recording quality is exceptional, as with most Challenge SACDs. Tracks: Tah-DUM!; Monster Rally; For You; Over Here; Interlude #1, Lovely, Song, Sing, Sung; Interlude #2; Elegy; Get Well Soon.

\_ - John Henry



**A Love Affair - The Music of Ivan Lins, as performed by: Sting, Vanessa Williams, Grover Washington Jr., New York Voices, Chaka Khan, Lisa Fischer & James Williams, Brenda Russell, Peter White, Freddy Cole, Dianne Reeves & Ivan Lins himself - Telarc multichannel**

**SACD-63496, 53:09 \*\*\*\*:**

Lins name may not be synonymous with bossa nova in North America, but he is Brazil's leading pop songwriter. His songs have been performed by the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson and Lee Ritenour, yet we haven't received the recognition he deserves here. In this collection ten different performers or performing ensembles turn their attention to his music, and things are wrapped by Lins himself. Many of these tunes have not been recorded in English before, or done as instrumentals. Lins joins in on keyboards on three of the tracks. My favorite was the New York Voices contribution on Answered Prayers. Telarc is honest in revealing that the original tracks were recorded with PCM - not DSD, but the sonic quality is quite excellent and suitably surrounding in the multichannel option.

Tracks: She Walks This Earth, Love Dance, Camaleao, Answered Prayers, So Crazy for This Love, You Moved Me to This, Nocturne, Elis, I'm Not Along, Sweet Presence, Somos Todos.

- John Henry



**Wayne Horvitz & Robin Holcomb - Solo Piano - Songlines multichannel SACD SGK SA1550-2, 56:16 \*\*\*\*:**

Pianists Horvitz and Holcomb have been partners in life and music for almost three decades. In this disc they share billing for the first time, but each playing solo piano alone - generally alternating tracks but occasional one doing two tracks in a row. Both were originally influenced by Cecil Taylor but have mellowed into a more tonal style that sometimes reflect Debussy or Satie and other times Jarrett or Chick Corea. Horvitz follows a more single-note linear style and Holcomb is more at home in early American folk music as well as Indonesian music. This is a great idea for a different sort of two-piano album - the performers are clearly indicated on the jewelbox so you can follow along and try to differentiate them. Songlines has high standards on recording quality and the surround mix presents the instrument directly in front with very natural reflections in the hall.

The 14 tracks are except for three all compositions of either Horvitz or Holcomb: Reno, Tired, Armageddon, The Pleasures of Motion, Joanna's Solo, Before the Comet Comes, Stars Fell on Alabama, Interpretation #1, The Road to Zamora, Buttermilk Hill, Up Do, interpretation #2, Done For, Crispin and Lisa's Duet.

- John Henry



**Phoenix - Patrick Zimmerli, composer and soprano sax (octet of strings, piano, percussion, electronics) - Songlines multichannel SACD SGL SA1548-2, 63:58 \*\*\*\*:**

Zimmerli, a NYC-based musician, says this is the most experimental of the six CDs he has done, but it should appeal to listeners in many different areas. He has combined his sax, piano and electric bass with a string quartet and synths to create a rich and varied sonic tapestry influenced by many different elements. There is creative interplay of the electronic instruments with the acoustic ones, some touches of ambient music, minimalist approaches, and Middle Eastern music. My personal favorite jazz album has long been Stan Getz' Focus, which escapes the usual corny solo-instrument-and-strings genre with the imaginative compositions of Eddie Sauter. Zimmerli gives us a 21st-century version of that project, which benefits from his experiences in not only the jazz world but also classical, electronic, popular and film music. One track is not his original, and I think it's the most tasteful arrangement of the bossa nova hit How Insensitive that I've ever laid ears on.

He states that he can't escape from pop music and wouldn't want to because there is so much creative work going on in it today. What he aims for is "a contemporary, aesthetically viable, pan-stylistic art music." Quite a mouthful - but sit back and bathe in the striking sounds that surround you in this audiophile-quality 5.0 SACD mix and the terminology will be secondary. Note that one of the 14 tracks is titled Only Surround.

Tracks: M, Away From You, Wunderlichen Stadt, How Insensitive, Clouds and Machines, The Bird Dances, Breath, M, Feel, Gnosis Crisis, Only Surround, Beginning, Summer Passes, M.

- John Henry



**Foné Jazz Makers - Girl of My Dreams - Stereo-only SACD 014 SACD, 62:54 \*\*\*\*:**

This disc was a bit of a surprise, coming with the latest batch of classical SACDs from the audiophile-oriented Italian classical label Foné. It features a trad jazz quintet of three horns, Sousaphone and banjo. And the band was formed originally to play during an Italian audio show. Their recording was made in 2000 using a Nagra 4S analog recorder and the original tapes were transferred directly to DSD for the SACD layer. At the same time a Nakamichi 1000 digital recorder was used and its original tapes provided the CD layer of this disc. They performed in a theater with good acoustics and like most such ensembles sort of made up their numbers on the spot. The band is good, though not quite as tight as some of the trad bands on the Opus 3 label from Sweden, though the thought of the superb recording quality reminded me of those efforts from further north. There are some vocals, and the Italian accents give an interesting slant to the performances.

Tracks: Darktown Strutters' Ball, Big Bad Bully, Nobody Knows the Way I Feel This Morning, Boogie-Oolie, Glory of Love, Shake That Thing, Girl of My Dreams, Rosetta, Wabash Blues, Alexander's

Ragtime Band, Sister Kate, Weary Blues, Someday Sweetheart, Canal Street Blues, Mama Don't 'Low.

- John Henry



**André Geraissati, acoustic guitars - Canto das Aguas (with Homero Lotito, keyboards; Jose Alexandre Carvlho, bass; Renato Martins, percussion) - CAVI Records stereo SACD-001\*\*\*\*:**

This is one of pair of discs which are the first SACDs from Brazil specifically and more than that the first to come from Latin America in general. They were recorded at an audiophile-level studio in Sao Paulo by a Brazilian audio & video magazine, Revista do Audio e Video. Each instrument was miked separately and the recording was made entirely in real time. Both discs present the best in Brazilian instrumental music. Geraissati's 11 compositions are varied and explore new sonorities of the guitar. With the quartet he achieves some nearly symphonic sounds, but the album's title tune (which means something like Waters Song) is done as a guitar solo. These are not bossa nova retreads but very lovely instrumental explorations buoyed by the unique rhythms and melodic originality of the best of Brazilian music which makes it some of the most exciting in the world.

Tracks: Agreste, Fazenda, Canto das Aguas, Sempre em Meu Coracao, Banzo, Kenya, Com o Sol nas Maos, Entre Duas Palavras, Benguela, Canto des Aguas, Paz.



**André Mehmani, piano - Lachrimae (with Celio Barros or Ze A. Carvalho, doublebass; Rogerio Boccato or Sergio Reze, battery/percussion; Monica Salmaso, vocals; Lca Raele, clarinet; Dimos Goudaroulis, cello) - CAVI Records stereo SACD-002, 70:05 \*\*\*\*:**

Mehmani is a young pianist and composer who was going to do an album of favorite Brazilian ballads for Cavi, but the producer said that each time he came in to see them he had more new beautiful compositions of his own. So the session ended up being ballads and waltzes, but exactly half of the 14 originals by Mehmani. The others present tunes of Caymmi, Jobim, Nascimento, Cavaquinho, Neto and Pixinguinha. Mehmani's attractive arrangements of all of them are a delight. Vocalist Salmaso is heard on two of the tracks. I found this one of the most enjoyable collections of Brazilian music I've heard in some time, and the recorded quality is superb.

Tracks: Eternamente (trio), Dindi, So Louco, Francisco, Amor Perfeito, Eternamente (solo piano), Canto Primeiro, Uma Valsa em Forma de Arvore, Lachrimae, Eternamente (duo), Passarinhadadeira, Pra Dizer Adeus, Segundo Tema, Carinhoso.

- John Henry

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