



▶ **Review:** John Pizzarelli's previous Concord album, *Midnight McCartney*

▶ "An ideal fit for downy Jobim gems": John Pizzarelli

**JOHN PIZZARELLI**

**SINATRA & JOBIM @ 50**

(Concord Jazz)



In 1964, when Getz and Gilberto ignited the bossa-nova craze across America, vocalists of all stripes—from Perry Como

to Mel Tormé to Sarah Vaughan—quickly went Latin. Sinatra was a tad late to the party, teaming with bossa's global exemplar for 1967's *Francis Albert Sinatra & Antônio Carlos Jobim*. Speculation was that Sinatra, then at the height of his ring-a-ding-ding bravado, was ill suited to such delicate material. In fact, he delivered what is arguably his finest album of the era, his exquisitely crafted readings shot through with soft sapience. He and Jobim reunited in '69, but Sinatra was dissatisfied with his performances (most surfaced on 1971's *Sinatra & Company*).

Now, a half-century on, John Pizzarelli revisits the Sinatra-Jobim oeuvre with sublimely honorific results. With his slight, sensitive voice, Pizzarelli is an ideal fit for such downy Jobim gems as "Meditation," "Corcovado," "Dindi," "Bonita" and "If You Never Come to Me." While duties were evenly split across the 1967-69 sessions—Sinatra's vocals, Jobim's guitar artistry (and occasional

vocals)—Pizzarelli fills both roles. He does, however, feature his own Jobim, grandson Daniel, who adds dusky vocals on four tracks and subs for pianist Helio Alves on one.

Among the 11 tracks are four from beyond the Sinatra-Jobim playlist: Jobim's windswept "Two Kites," Michael Frank's lilting tribute, "Antonio's Song," and two originals. Writing with his wife, Jessica Molaskey, Pizzarelli's "She's So Sensitive" seems the antecedent to Jobim's Sinatra-covered "Insensatez," while their bilingual "Canto Casual" provides a fittingly sunny coda.

**DOMINIQUE EADE & RAN BLAKE**

**TOWN AND COUNTRY** (Sunnyside)



Close to four decades have passed since Dominique Eade transferred to the New England Conservatory expressly for the opportunity to study with Ran Blake. And it's been six years since Eade and Blake issued *Whirlpool*, their first collaborative album and a masterpiece of voice-piano legerdemain on par with Blake's classic 1962 union with Jeanne Lee.

Impressive as *Whirlpool* remains, it pales in comparison to the bold,

variegated brilliance of *Town and Country*. Long celebrated for his bracing dexterity, Blake's genre-blurring mastery of jazz, blues, classical and gospel is essential to a mélange as intensely diverse as this album, recorded at NEC (where both are now on the faculty). Eighteen tracks crowded into 47 minutes, this matching of interpretive wits tiptoes in with a gentle "Lullaby" before opening up to a panoply of sentiments. A jagged reimagining of Dylan's "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)," bordering on hip-hop, melds with an otherworldly "Moon River," seguing to the bleakness of "West Virginia Mine Disaster," the towering piety of Mahalia Jackson's "Elijah Rock" and the bereft Johnny Cash prison anthem "Give My Love to Rose."

Rounding the midpoint with Blake's brief, bloodcurdling "Harvest at Massachusetts General Hospital," there are still plenty of curves ahead. The program zigzags from an angular, shadowy "Moonglow/Theme From 'Picnic'" to a soft yet sinewy "Moonlight in Vermont" and a chilling "Goodnight, Irene"; treads slowly, darkly along Nelson Riddle's "Open Highway"; and turns rapturous for Charles Ives' eulogistic "Thoreau." Artful. Mercurial. Exhilarating.

**GIACOMO GATES**

**WHAT TIME IS IT?** (Savant)



In Mark Murphy's wake, there are two contenders for coolest, sharpest male vocalist around. One,

Kurt Elling, is a household name, at least within jazz circles. The other, Giacomo Gates, deserves to be. Gates, now 67, waited until his 40s to pursue music full-time, but quickly emerged as a deeply insightful vocal acrobat, preternaturally skilled in scat and vocalese, and a first-rate storyteller.

Eight albums in, Gates turns his attention to time—not time signatures (à la Dave Brubeck) but physical time. A spoken-word intro provides a rapid-fire compendium of timepieces, from sundials to stopwatches, concluding with Gates' observation that "still, most people don't know what time it really is"—an ideal segue to a laidback reading of Rodgers and Hart's "I Didn't

Know What Time It Was.” Thereafter, the time connection becomes less literal, and Gates’ focus shifts to romantic times, good times, flush times, hard times and such. As usual, Gates draws upon his vocal heroes, with two nods to Oscar Brown Jr.—an aptly forlorn “Somebody Buy Me a Drink” and peppery “Mr. Kicks”—and one to Eddie Jefferson, with a lithe “Disappointed,” plus a mellow treatment of Betty Carter’s “I Can’t Help It.” The rest of the program travels from the 1950s—the pop hit “Silhouettes” and Tadd Dameron’s “On a Misty Night”—to the present day: octogenarian drummer and bandleader Artt Frank’s boplicious “A Few Bucks Ahead” and, to close, Gates’ spoken-word bookend, “Too Many Things,” a warning that the time has come to get our priorities straight.

## MARK MURPHY

**WILD AND FREE:  
LIVE AT THE KEYSTONE CORNER**

(HighNote)



June 1980: Mark Murphy arrives for a gig at San Francisco’s landmark Keystone Korner. He’s savoring what is arguably

the most satisfactory tract of his five-decade career. The days of hidebound labels trying to shoehorn him into a Sinatra or Andy Williams mold are a distant memory; his rollercoaster recording history has settled into a fulfilling groove, midway through a 14-year relationship with Muse; his creative fearlessness, on record and onstage, is fully unleashed.

Hardly surprising, then, that this newly excavated 60-minute set represents Murphy at his absolute finest and most limber, the sheer joy he takes in interpretive bending and twisting anchored by an unwavering sangfroid. Murphy proves, as expected, masterful at shaping a set list at once familiar and unexpected, supported by his then-regular pianist, Paul Potyén, and a trio of his preferred local players. He draws on the songbook of fellow vocal pioneers Lambert, Hendricks and Ross, making “Bijou,” “Farmer’s Market,” “Charleston Alley” and “Fiesta in Blue” uniquely his own. He nods to the bossa rhythms he loved with a swirling “Waters of March” and adds a few favorite standards,

including Cy Coleman’s delightfully rapturous “You Fascinate Me So.” His “Stompin’ at the Savoy” is a loose-limbed, scat-trimmed tour de force. “Body and Soul” becomes a testament to insatiable hunger, emotional and carnal. The inkiness of his deep-aching “Blues in the Night” is matched only by an “I’ve Got You Under My Skin” chilling in the nakedness of its desire, the menace of it covetousness.

## MARK WINKLER

**THE COMPANY I KEEP** (Café Pacific)



How do you keep the music playing? So wondered Mark Winkler after the death of Richard

Del Belso, his partner and husband of 35 years. Winkler’s solution: count on the support of musical friends. Result: his most richly accomplished album to date.

Several of the participating pals are fellow singers. To open, he teams with Jackie Ryan on Donald Fagen’s “Walk Between the Raindrops,” a delightful reminder of Winkler’s inherent coolness. Up next is Cheryl Bentyne, for a smoothly satisfying take on Prince’s “Strollin’.” Steve Tyrell proves an ideal studio mate on the deliciously tart “But It Still Ain’t So,” a new Winkler co-composition; Sara Gazarek enriches another original, the cuddly “Rainproof”; and Claire Martin is onboard for a magnificent “Stolen Moments,” Mark Murphy’s lyric slightly twisted to honor Murphy himself.

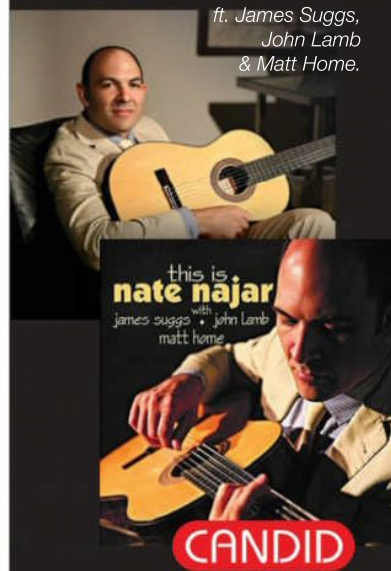
Six pianists (all doubling as arrangers) are featured across the dozen tracks, including Josh Nelson, Jamieson Trotter, John Beasley, David Benoit, Rich Eames—alone with Winkler on the warmly ruminative “Here’s to Life”—and Eric Reed, on Winkler and Marilyn Harris’ “That Afternoon in Harlem,” a charming ode to a faded jazz singer, and the velvety “Love Comes Quietly.” Also on the stellar guest list: guitarist Larry Koonse, drummer Jeff Hamilton, saxophonist Bob Sheppard and bassist John Clayton. And there’s one silent partner, Bill Cantos, who united with Winkler to craft the time-traveling “Midnight in Paris” (a clever nod to the Woody Allen film) and the sagely reflective “The Sum.” **JT**

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