

**Dear Abbey: The Music of Abbey Lincoln**  
**Teri Roiger (Inner Circle)**  
 by Joel Roberts

Abbey Lincoln is nearly alone among the late great divas of jazz singing - the ones instantly identifiable by first name alone, like Ella, Sarah, Billie, Carmen, Betty - in that she wrote much of her own material and left behind as rich a legacy as a composer as she did as a vocalist. There have been a handful of recorded tributes to this much beloved artist but not many, which is a surprise given what a fertile ground for exploration and improvisation her compositions provide.

Veteran vocalist Teri Roiger answers the call to keep Lincoln's music alive on her new CD, which revisits 13 of Lincoln's best tunes, including "Wholly Earth", "Bird Alone" and "You Gotta Pay the Band". It is an obviously heartfelt effort that's helped immeasurably by Roiger's impressive musicianship and a vocal timbre that in many ways recalls Lincoln's. Like Lincoln and their mutual influence Billie Holiday, Roiger doesn't have a big voice, but she makes up for it with a delicate, sultry, sure-handed touch and a flair for drama. Also like Lincoln, she surrounds herself with superb sidemen and gives them plenty of room to roam. Her fine quartet includes husband John Menegon (bass), Frank Kimbrough (piano) and drummer Steve Williams. Alto master Greg Osby appears as a guest soloist on five tunes and guitarist Mark Dziuba on one.

If there's a complaint here, it's that the arrangements, while handled expertly and enthusiastically, stick pretty close to Lincoln's originals, a shame given the opportunities her open-ended tunes provide for fresh treatments. Still, this is an enjoyable hour spent with a delightful vocalist and some wonderful tunes. Kudos to Roiger for doing her part to ensure that Lincoln's still underappreciated songs earn their rightful place in the jazz canon.

For more information, visit [innercirclemusic.net](http://innercirclemusic.net). This project is at Dizzy's Club Sep. 3rd. See Calendar.



**Hope Dawson is Missing**  
**Jessica Pavone (Tzadik)**  
 by Sean Fitzell

Widely known for her work with composer Anthony Braxton and longstanding duet with guitarist Mary Halvorson, violist Jessica Pavone seeks boundary-blurring music. In her own projects, she's infused folk-like song forms into classical chamber settings and improvising groups. On her Tzadik debut *Songs of Synastry and Solitude*, Pavone composed for a string quartet with bass supplanting 2nd violin.

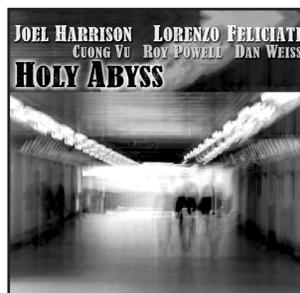
On the followup *Hope Dawson is Missing*, she augments the chamber group with Halvorson's guitar, Tomas Fujiwara's drums and Emily Manzo's voice. The song-cycle explores contradictions - deprivation and nourishment, demolition and reconstruction, falsity and truth - and the music similarly works in

contrasts of instrumentation and style with dramatic results.

The prelude "Hope" boasts the Toomai String Quartet introducing recurring melodic motifs, including one spurred by insistent but spare percussion. A clipped guitar phrase opens "Providence", as bass and percussion pulse sweeping string movements and short call-and-responses for Manzo to sing against. Her almost liturgical delivery on "Dawn to Dark" matches the strings' emotively soaring highs and rumbling lows, suggesting both spiritual and physical longing. "If You Can't", an uncomplicated song interestingly introduced by plucked strings, gains momentum as the voice mirrors the string cadence and percussion punctuates the phrases.

Halvorson provides textural relief after classical strings open "Plutonium", as bass and cello pulsate with supporting minimalist touches. Fujiwara's unwavering percussion paces "Jump to the Thunder" as the piece morphs into a colloquial song from its classically structured beginning and he powers the concluding "And at Last" with a forceful and melodic solo before a dynamic middle passage of guitar and cropped pizzicato retorts recede to a moody atmosphere and brief vocal denouement. A phrase from "Deconstruction, Reconstruction" may best summarize Pavone's maturation as a composer: "confidence results in migration from what's familiar."

For more information, visit [tzadik.com](http://tzadik.com). This project is at I-Beam Sep. 4th. See Calendar.



**Holy Abyss**  
**Joel Harrison/Lorenzo Feliciati (Cuneiform)**  
 by Ken Waxman

There's a thin line between low-key and listless and sadly much of this otherwise lyrical CD crosses it many times. For some reason the five seasoned musicians decided to pitch most of this program of all-originals at tempos that range from gloomy to lugubrious, only occasionally lively enough to sound cheerful.

Certainly the talent is here. New York-based session co-leader guitarist Joel Harrison, whose previous CDs have featured the likes of saxophonist Dave Liebman, manages to work in trebly tone distortions and spidery reverb in some of his solos, but otherwise stays more linear than a super highway. Italian bassist Lorenzo Feliciati, the session's co-leader, was influenced by King Crimson and worked with saxophonist Bob Mintzer, but his writing on three tracks seems more noteworthy than his stolid playing. British keyboardist Roy Powell, who now lives in Norway, has played with figures such as guitarist Terje Rypdal and manages to inhabit many piano styles from supper-club comping to bop chording. Drummer Dan Weiss, sideman of choice for saxist David Binney among others, plays spaciously and rhythmically, but never seems to dig into the material. Probably the biggest surprise is Seattle-based trumpeter Cuong Vu, whose harmonizing with Harrison provides many of the CDs defining moments, closer to his discreet contributions to guitarist Pat Metheny's group.

That said the trumpeter's best soloing occurs on the Harrison-composed "North Wind (Mistral)", where his flutter-tonguing and vibrating triplets join Feliciati's slap bass and the composer's rock-tinged licks to toughen the initially moderato theme. "Small Table Rules", composed by the bassist, is a spirited

stand-out, although its soul-jazz vibe sounds a bit strained. With the chromatic line pushed along by Weiss' rolls and pops, the piece gains in intensity as it careens forward, goosed by sustained triplets from Vu, until Harrison's steady blues progression calms things down to eventual diminuendo.

With artful composing and playing evident at points, *Holy Abyss* isn't in a complete void. But next time out more variety in the writing and liveliness in its execution could move the band closer to producing something (w)holly satisfying.

For more information, visit [cuneiformrecords.com](http://cuneiformrecords.com). Harrison is at ShapeShifter Lab Sep. 6th. See Calendar.

## UNEARTHED GEM



**The Bremen Concert**  
**Noah Howard Quartet (JaZt TAPES)**  
 by Robert Iannapolo

By 1975, when this concert was recorded, alto saxophonist Noah Howard had already logged six years as an expatriate, residing in France. In the late '60s, as a member of the second wave of free jazzers, with a brace of ESP albums to his credit but with dwindling live venue options and very little press, he had little choice but to leave the US to find an audience. It's somewhat surprising since, among the vanguardists, his style was more accessible than most. His tone was lyrical but with a tart edge and his solos could pack heat. But he was just as likely to bask in a lyrical glow as he was to scream his piece.

Recordings from this time period featured a quartet that usually included pianist Takashi Kako, bassist Kent Carter and drummer Oliver Johnson. *The Bremen Concert* is with that group and is the third recording to be released from Howard's European tour of early 1975. (*Berlin Concert* and *In Europe, Vol. 1* are the others.) One has to question this release, however. It's a copy of a radio broadcast and the sound is less than optimal. The first minute is practically inaudible due to what sounds like a crinkled tape. When it does finally settle into what seems like a reasonable sound, the bass is boomy and overpowering, the drums are muffled and the piano is underrecorded. Additionally songs and musicians are mislabeled.

But all that said, this is a prime Noah Howard performance. The opening track, listed as "Ole Negro", a Noah Howard tune found on his *Black Ark*, has nothing to do with what is played. It's actually Coltrane's "Ole", a piece Howard frequently used as an opener around this time. It's a stirring performance and Howard tears through it with verve. "Pearl Stream" has a skeletal theme that is quickly discarded as the band navigates into free territory. Howard's passionate, searing sound spits out shredding lines while Kako's peculiar mix of Cecil Taylor and McCoy Tyner scurries after him. "New Arrival" is a feature for Howard's limpid lyricism and "Ziki" closes the set with Coltrane-ish meditative calm. *The Bremen Concert* is as good as any example of Howard's music of this period. Just wish it sounded better.

For more information, visit [janstrom.se](http://janstrom.se)