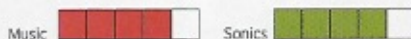
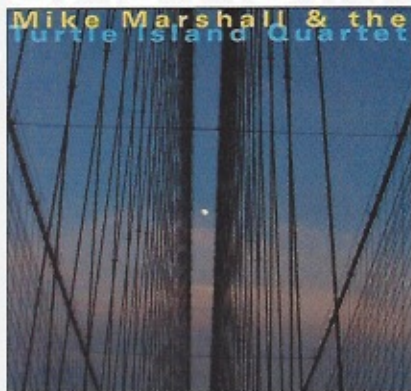


Jazz Music Reviews



Mike Marshall & the Turtle Island Quartet. Adventure Music.

Mandolin virtuoso Marshall continues to push the envelope on what this “bluegrass instrument” can do by tackling bebop, classical, Brazilian choros, and beyond. On his first encounter with the wildly eclectic Turtle Island Quartet, Marshall once again traverses an impressive expanse of musical territory. TIQ violinist and principal composer David Balakrishnan wrote the opening “For Mandolin and String Quartet in Four Movements” which taps a kaleidoscopic array of styles—in the first movement alone. Movement II, “Inner Voices,” segues from chamber to gypsy jazz while movement IV, “Thyaga,” blends elements of Indian classical music with serious groove and newgrass gestures. Other tracks offer Marshall reviving his funky “Gator Strut” (title track from his 1987 Rounder album), dancing over a sprightly three-part “Brazilian Choro Medley,” and sailing with the strings in perfect synch through Egberto Gismonti’s chops-busting “Loro.” Marshall also contributes the lovely heartland-ish melody, “Sweet Mills.” After so much virtuosity the collection closes on a decidedly earthy note, with mandolinist and strings converging on a Darol Anger arrangement of Robert Johnson’s blues classic “Crossroads” that has Marshall wailing away on mandocello. **BM**

Further Listening: Mike Marshall/Darol Anger: *The Duo*; TIQ: *Have You Ever Been...?*



Paul Desmond/Gerry Mulligan: *Two Of A Mind*. Speakers Corner (LP).

Once bebop had established a beachhead for modern jazz in jazz history, the next two waves were divided between the hard boppers and cool schoolers, the former being generally considered the hard-swinging extroverts and the latter the more cerebral introverts. Generally the free jazz revolutionaries that followed took their cues from the hard boppers, but they did appropriate two important cool-school innovations: the jettisoning of a chordal instrument in the rhythm section, and the use of contrapuntal improvisation by two horns in such a quartet. These go hand-in-hand, since it’s the open sonic space that leaves room for the horns to run loose. Baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan pioneered this approach in the early 1950s with Chet Baker, and returned to it frequently throughout his career. Among his most engaging frontline partners in this endeavor was the lyrical altoist, Paul Desmond. The aptly titled *Two Of A Mind* was the fourth collaboration by the pair, and it’s terrific. Both saxophonists are in fine form as soloists, though someone seems to have forgotten to remind Mulligan that he was not supposed to be a “hot” player, and they really spur each other on in the collectively improvised choruses that highlight every track. **Duck Baker**

Further Listening: *Desmond Blue*; *Gerry Mulligan Quartet*



The Pixels: *We Are All Small Pixels*. Cuneiform.

The Pixels are a young Norwegian jazz quartet whose lead vocalist, bassist, and principal songwriter, Ellen Andrea Wang, is adept at all those roles. Their sound combines jazz elements with a pop sensibility during the vocal numbers that constitute about half the album. At times they may remind you of such early fusion artists as Weather Report, Passport, or Flora Purim—Wang’s bouncy bass lines, for example, have some Jaco in them—but this all-acoustic band has opted for a much more natural-sounding recording. The piano-less lineup of drums, double bass, sax, and trumpet gives each instrument room to breathe and helps produce an uncluttered sound augmented by a nimble rhythm section. Contrast is provided on “Night Dreamer,” “Sigma,” and “Daylight,” where saxophonist Harald Lassen switches from soprano to tenor and the band raises the energy level a few notches. Catchy melodies belie the intricacy of the music, beginning with the tricky vocal-and-horn unison lines, all delivered with razor-sharp precision and captured in a pristine and detailed recording. This accessible young band, true to jazz but with a fresh approach, renews my conviction that new artists exist who, with a little exposure, could help jazz reach a broader audience. **JW**

Further Listening: The Pixels: *Reminder*; SynKoke: *The Ideologist*