

**Carla Marciano
Quartet
Stream Of
Consciousness**

ALFA MUSIC 153

★★★

The past 10 years have witnessed the rise of European female saxophonists. Now, Italy has Carla Marciano, a powerful and passionate musician who selected the alto and the soprano as her axes of preference. Contrary to many of her continental peers, Marciano puts her own stamp on an approach that has been well trodden rather than trying to chart new territories.

Indeed, her quartet is highly reminiscent of the one John Coltrane led during his Impulse period, and the title of her new disc could not be more explicit. And her reworking of an English traditional arranged by pianist/husband Alessandro La Corte has an air of Coltrane's take on "Greensleeves," and that the originals penned by Marciano that make up the rest of the recording have familiar, albeit timeless, attributes. What distinguishes the session is Marciano herself. She has developed a thick and broad tone on both instruments as well as a fluid articulation. She is equally at ease in a serene ballad, a brazen uptempo piece or an open improvisational flight. Her rhythm section is quite sympathetic and accomplishes the task at hand with flying colors but does not match the leader in the personality compartment.

—Alain Drouot

Stream Of Consciousness: God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen; Stream Of Consciousness—Preceding/Inner Blast (Introduction/Part I); Stream Of Consciousness—Consequence (Part II); Stream Of Consciousness—Turning point (Part III); Inside; Handshake. (63:14)

Personnel: Carla Marciano, alto and soprano saxophone; Alessandro La Corte, piano; Aldo Vigorito, bass; Gaetano Fasano, drums.

Ordering info: alfamusic.com



**Jason Palmer
Take A Little Trip**

STEEPLECHASE 31750

★★★★

What a novel idea—refurbish songs associated with Minnie Riperton into modern jazz explorations. Fortunately, trumpeter Jason Palmer steered clear from the novelty route on this exquisite disc by mapping out a far richer path, marked by subtle interplay, elliptical phrasing and daring arrangements. Palmer never tries to mimic Riperton's piercing operatic high notes, a feature that almost overshadowed her gift for interpreting lyrics and melodies. He allots plenty of room for his band to follow the harmonic and melodic contours of the songs without turning the proceedings into to glib showboating. Palmer's burnished tone does recall Riperton's clarion soprano in that neither seems prone to unnecessary embellishments. Like Riperton—who didn't sing with much melisma—Palmer isn't one for much brassy vibrato. While Palmer keeps the playing mainly at a gentle lo-fi level, propelled with Lee Fish's superb drumming and Edward Perez's shadowy bass lines, the music unfolds with multiple surprises. Such is the case on Riperton's signature tune, "Lovin' You," a song that often lends itself to overwrought renderings. Here Perez and Fish supply the classic with quicksilver momentum, Palmer often pairing his trumpet lines with Greg Duncan's amber-toned guitar passages while Jake Sherman affords the song a '70s FM-radio sound with his Fender Rhodes accompaniment.

—John Murph

Take A Little Trip: Take A Little Trip; Lovin' You; I'm In Love Again; Adventures In Paradise; Inside My Love; Memory Lane; I'm A Woman. (72:36)

Personnel: Jason Palmer, trumpet; Greg Duncan, guitar; Jake Sherman, piano, Fender Rhodes; Edward Perez, bass; Lee Fish, drums.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk



**The Skinny
Dig On It**

TIPPIN' 1111

★★★

Brimming with dirty grooves and mellowed out by a care-free take on funk, Kyle Asche's quartet The Skinny achieves a kind of soul-jazz bliss with *Dig On It*, the culmination of six years of gigging at jazz-friendly eateries in Chicago. While no single moment on the disc is likely to propel the group into a full-time project, their first recording together suggests the potential of a staying power beyond the Chicago scene.

A solid homage to Jimmy McGriff, the title track doesn't venture too far afield of its inspiration. But organist Ben Paterson plays with an energy that both sustains and updates the tune's spirit, while Asche's guitar work heightens the juxtaposition of bluesy hard-bop and funk pioneered by McGriff. In addition to classics by McGriff and crowd-pleasers like "Ain't No Love In The Heart Of The City," *Dig On It* features a handful of memorable originals. Jake Vinsel's "Slim's Walk" commands attention with a sustained organ howl. Things heat up from there, as Vinsel holds down the rhythm with a below-ground heartbeat and Asche eases his way into what becomes a smoking, blues-infused meander. Four contributions from Asche round out the disc, the most creative of which are a pair of vignettes—"Wings Of Gold" and "Booker"—that provide evocative snapshots of the band's sound.

—Jennifer Odell

Dig On It: Slim's Walk; Dig On It; The Slidedown; Ain't No Love In The Heart Of The City; Give It Up; Chris Cross; In The Garden; Holding; Juliboots; Booker; Long Division; Wings Of Gold; Osa; Sea Of Tranquility; J Rock. (63:58)

Personnel: Kyle Asche, guitar; Ben Paterson, Hammond B3 organ; Jake Vinsel, bass; Mike Schlick, drums.

Ordering info: tippinrecords.com



**Zach Brock
Almost Never Was**

CRISS CROSS JAZZ 1349

★★★★½

The big idea on *Almost Never Was* is restraint. The tunes are filled with heat and emotion, but violinist Zach Brock and company—pianist Aaron Goldberg, bassist Matt Penman and drummer Eric Harland—keep things cooking at a steady simmer.

Almost Never Was flies highest when exploring Brock's original material. The pop-ish title track places a gentle, yearning violin melody over sparkling piano pitches, sparse bass lining and encouraging drums before issuing a heartfelt statement from Penman. An understatedly funky piece in 6/8, "Among The Stars" boasts a swaggering improvisation from the leader and unfailingly solid percussion from Harland. And beginning with focused plucking from the violin, the at-times Bill Frisell-like "Common Ground" centers around a no-nonsense two-chord vamp that, along with Harland's restless, skittering drums, pushes the soloists to find the ties that bind them together.

The album's cover songs bear mentioning, too. Jimi Hendrix's tricky, r&b-influenced "Drifting" features Brock on baritone violin, and finds the ensemble tackling the song's earthy but mystical riffs and progressions with grace and care.

—Brad Farberman

Almost Never Was: Common Ground; Black Narcissus; You've Changed; Turbulent Plover; Almost Never Was; The Water; Monk's Dream; Among The Stars; Drifting. (63:08)

Personnel: Zach Brock, violin, baritone violin (9); Aaron Goldberg, piano; Matt Penman, bass; Eric Harland, drums.

Ordering info: crisscrossjazz.com

