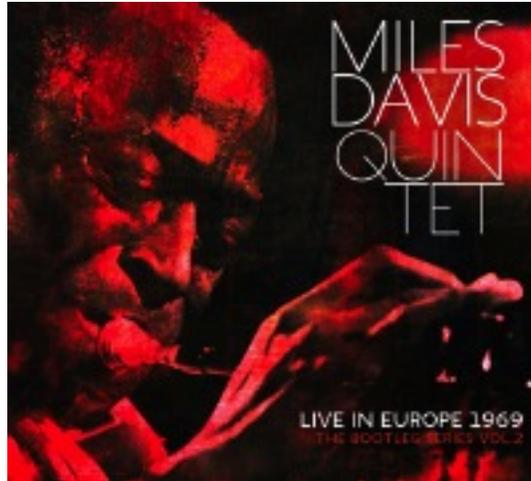


Dave Hartl's 2013 Top Ten (or so) Most Influential Albums

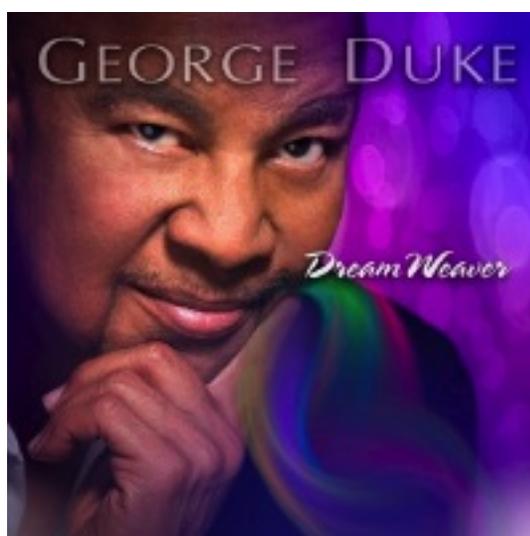
(This year, these are in no particular order, so I made them alphabetical by artist)



1.) Miles Davis Quintet: Live in Europe 1969: The Bootleg Series Vol 2

Columbia Legacy keeps raiding its vaults for unreleased gems by established artists, and this one is one of the best. Europe always appreciated the American art form of jazz much more than America did itself, so when Miles brought his unbelievable quintet (Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette) to Europe, the TV stations made sure to chronicle the event. And a damn good thing they did because this band was dubbed the “Lost Band” since Miles never did get them together in a studio to record and the American venues never really bothered. This is free playing based around little motifs

that Miles would cue and some of it really gets out there. Chick Corea in particular, playing a lidless Fender Rhodes so he can access the mechanics and his mind still not befuddled by Scientology bullshit, never again played this openly. The set includes 3 CDs of music and a DVD that is unbelievable. Be glad European sensibilities are sharper than ours or this music would have been lost forever.



2.) George Duke – Dream Weaver

A sense of loss permeates this release, the great George Duke's final statement before his passing last year. Making it all the more tragic is the presence on a 15-minute jam of guitarist Jef Lee Johnson, one of the most underappreciated talents of the last 50 years. It's absolutely brilliant. Not tragic enough? Throw in a track by the late Teena Marie originally destined for a joint project she planned with Duke and you have a CD that I can barely listen to without choking up.

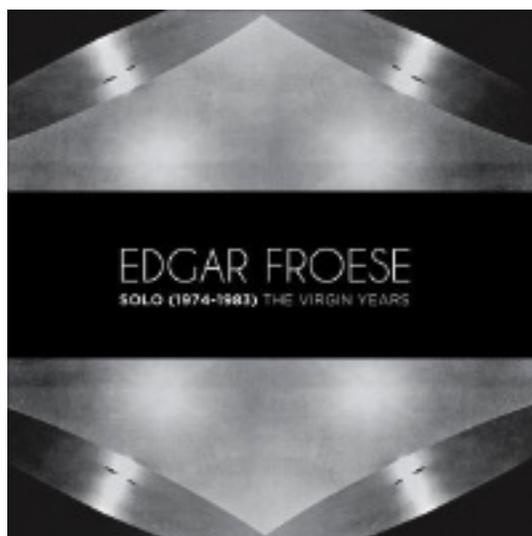
It's not all about tragedy though. George Duke was one of those guys whose influence on my generation was so enormous that we sort of took it for granted as a given. Listening to this takes me back to his incendiary performances with Frank Zappa I witnessed way back when, and reminds me of his off-kilter humor and soul so evident on his early albums. I wouldn't play the way I do if I hadn't listened to George Duke. True, this is a sad listen considering its encapsulation of immense losses in 2013, but it's ultimately a joyful celebration of the light of the human soul. We'll miss you Duke!



3.) Fairport Convention – “Babbacombe” Lee

Fairport remains a delight to the now-older generation; the Millenium guys don't know them at all from what I can tell. Fairport came along, originally with the amazing Sandy Denny on vocals, and fused English folk music with electric instruments back in the late '60's and early '70's. There were only a few groups that really did this well.

“Babbacombe” Lee was their attempt at a concept album, based on the failed execution of a simple-minded soul who defied the gallows three times and had to be set free by English law. I loved this album in my last year of high school and it’s been unavailable for decades. I finally found a CD release of it, and it’s as delightful as I ever remembered. Maybe it’s nostalgia, but I suspect it’s just a great album that’s been long forgotten.

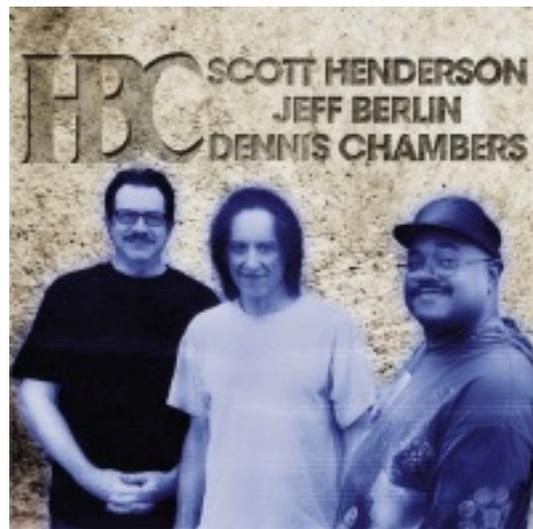


4.) Edgar Froese: Solo (1974-1983): The Virgin Years

Among the retail rubble, suspect food, and airborne grease cologne of the Quakertown Farmer’s Market lies Record Revival, the greatest CD store outside of the Princeton area. Ralph, the proprietor, never fails to get me obscure requests, the prices are lower than anywhere I know of, and the used bins bristle with unexpected rare finds, this 4-disc set being a case in point. I found it on a Saturday

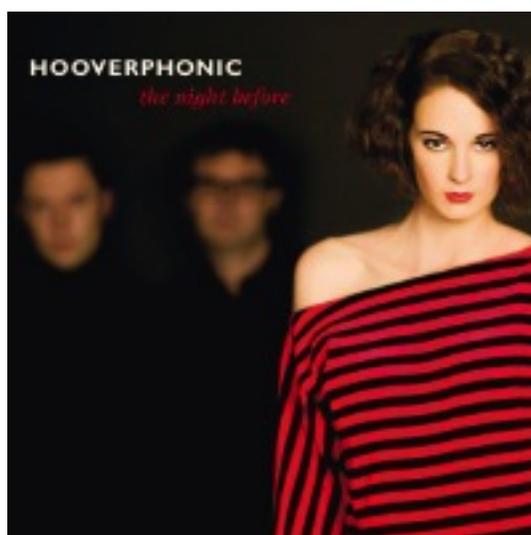
morning for \$7 and snatched it up immediately. It was an opportunity to check out in depth a man I know I owed something to, a founder of the electronica band Tangerine Dream, early trance music developer, and Synth Geek Supreme.

I don't listen to this music as much as to be absorbed into its field. If I listen closely, I have to admit to feeling a little bored. But as environmental background, it's the best. Being a Synth Geek myself, I really do marvel at how Froese managed to get the results he gets with the crude tools of this time period. Pimple-endowed adolescent nerds can sit in their rooms and have soft synth sequencers spit out similar textures, but if it wasn't for what's in these discs they would have to go back to Dungeons and Dragons. Classic stuff.



5.) Scott Henderson, Jeff Berlin, and Dennis Chambers:
HBC

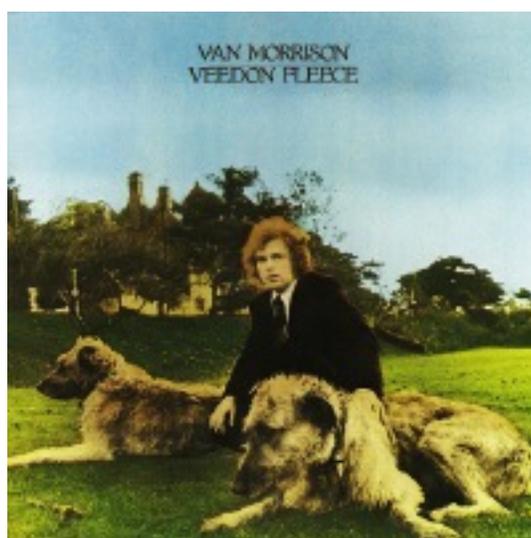
Last year's Top 10 list was a great bonanza of feedback from you readers and listeners, and I really enjoyed a lot of the suggestions that came along. This one was the best and appeared on quite a few of the lists. These three guys redefine the guitar power trio with some of the most remarkable playing I've heard in years. Their version of "Mysterious Traveller" should be enshrined in the next SETI mission launch by which aliens would judge our species. It's that good.



6.) Hooverphonic: The Night Before

I'm driving late one night listening to John Diliberto's Echoes show when he plays something I really liked. I looked it up online to see what it was and found the band Hooverphonics. I don't know why I like this, there's a lot of reasons I normally wouldn't: harmonically simple synth pop, obligatory attractive chick singer with little emotional range, etc.

But dammit, I can't help but be seduced by this. I purposely haven't researched anything about them, I suspect they're European but don't know. AND I DON'T WANT TO. I'm really afraid that knowing more about them will shatter the delicate niche they've made in my favorites, and I don't even want to hear any other albums by them, it can only disappoint I fear. Sometimes you gotta just accept what you like unquestionably, and this is one of those times.



7.) Van Morrison; Veedon Fleece

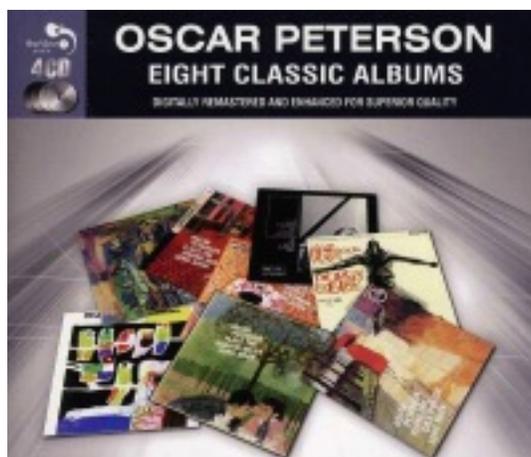
Over the last six months I've filled in the Van Morrison catalog in my iTunes library. Bog knows there's enough of it out there. I've been listening to scores of hours of the man from his first masterpiece, Astral Weeks, to his latest 2013 release Born to Sing: No Plan B. I could put about a dozen titles into this slot, all equally worthy, but I went with Veedon Fleece. Other Van Morrison albums that are sadly overlooked

by most but incredibly enjoyable anyway would have to include Hard Nose the Highway, Poetic Champions Compose, A Period of Transition, Inarticulate Speech of the Heart, and Common One. But Veedon Fleece occupies a special niche.

Coming out of the gate in 1968 after leaving his first group Them, Morrison had a 7-year supernova of a career: Astral Weeks, Moondance, His Band and Street Choir, Tupelo Honey, St. Domenic's Preview, Hard Nose the Highway, and finishing up with a live double album that would be a capstone of a career for anyone else, It's Too Late to Stop Now. Any of these albums could be in a person's all-time Top 10 list. But in 1974 he reached out to his muse, produced this album and then promptly fell off the map for a three-year vacation. It's more of the lengthy, dreamy ambiance of Astral Weeks than the hard-hitting R&B of the other albums to this point, but while summing up a short, brilliant career of incredible creativity it also looks ahead to his spiritual work in the 1980's that still lay far ahead. It's like he took his songwriting full circle in these seven years and made a perfect closure.

Van's for real. Rumors of his, uh...difficulty to deal with and insensitivity to his musicians abound, and I imagine he's seen a lot of people trying to abuse him and a lot of undeserved negative comments that could turn anyone into a misanthrope. But ultimately, what you leave behind is what counts. Listening to Veedon Fleece is hearing the end of a man's chapter in his life, and knowing what lies ahead makes

it all the more thrilling. Lesser artists could have recycled this creative period for a lifetime of tours. Van dug into his soul and kept going, leaving this album as a beacon to refer back to and a summation of his youth.



8.) Oscar Peterson: Eight Classic Albums

Back around 1975 or so I went to the now-demolished Valley Forge Music Fair. There was a triple bill (tickets probably ran about \$8) of Oscar Peterson solo, Ella Fitzgerald with Tommy Flanagan accompanying, and the Count Basie Orchestra. I was just starting to figure out what jazz was about and making fledgling attempts to play it on piano, very badly, and I thought that seeing these people whom I had heard of might be inspiring. Little did I know.

Oscar came out onto the stage, smiled, nodded, sat down and played for about 30 minutes. My life was never the same. After his last bow I realized I was crying uncontrollably, tears running down my face

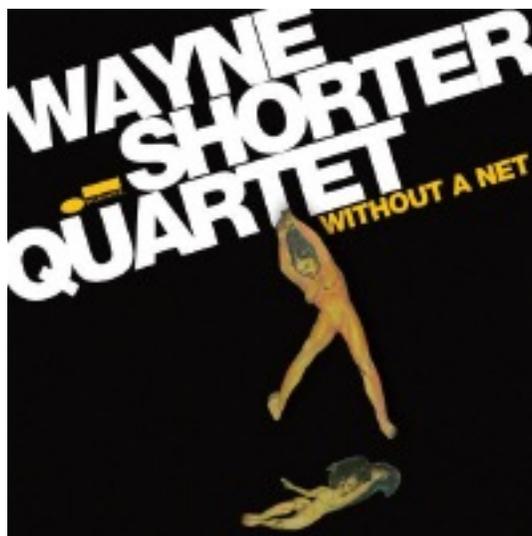
and a thought burning inside my brain: “This man must never die. Such ability and creativity is immortal.” I was never so completely overwhelmed in a concert situation as in that moment. I liked the other acts, but for me as a pianist I was in a state of shock and nothing got through quite like Oscar had. To this day I know I’ll never be able to touch Oscar’s level, but the attempt to pursue his trail has been a daily inspiration for decades.

This little 4-disc set is a repackaging of eight of his classic albums, all of them also featuring the great Ray Brown who, many years later, I had the honor of playing with and was totally, totally intimidated by. He had touched greatness on a daily basis that I would never know. Give these a listen and hear why.



9) Santana: Lotus

Originally released as a 3-LP quality vinyl gatefold release in Japan only, this captures the live 1973 Santana band as they rounded the corner from their early Latino roots and turned to the cosmos. Tom Costner has always been an inspiration on keyboards, the perfect foil to Carlos Santana's lyricism. I hadn't heard this in years and finally reconnected to it this year. I wasn't disappointed, it's as great as I remember, and even better as an older musician. I saw Santana when their 3rd album came out and remember it as one of the best shows I ever saw. Hearing this reaffirms that memory.



10.) Wayne Shorter: Without a Net

Wayne turned 80 this year. His quartet is, I feel, the greatest jazz band in the world, spontaneous, inventive, intuitive, and talented beyond belief. He does not disappoint with this release.

My puny words cannot begin to match the brilliance contained in this CD. Listen to it.

Kaz Yoshihara

Hi Dave,

Here is my list for 2013;

- 1) Roy Firestone interview with Todd Rundgren as a special feature on Healing and Todd DVD.

Very interesting interview. Shows are OK.

- 2) Truth Serum – Garland Jeffreys

Great song writing as always

- 3) Prism – Dave Holland

Probably the best existing student from School of Miles. Excellent show at SFJazz in October. Kevin Eubanks played like Jimi.

- 4) Dialect Fluorescent – Steve Lehman

One of the best alto players today. At least 10 times better than Steve Coleman (I always hated the guy).

- 5) Made Up Mind – Tedeschi Trucks Band

Derek Trucks is one of my guitar heroes now

- 6) O Que Sera – Stefano Bollani

I lost interest in Keith Jarrett after heard Bollani several years ago. Beautiful album. My most favorite piano player today. And he doesn't think he is God; so, that is a big plus.

7) Travel Guide – Ralph Towner

Just like any of his and Oregon's previous albums, so delicate, detailed, and beautiful.

8) Trios – Carla Bley

Just as good as Ralph Towner's album. Excellent. I like her better when she is not playing free jazz.

9) Out Here – Christian McBride Trio

Like all of his albums, this is a very entertaining, straight ahead jazz album. And Christian Sands on piano and Ulysses Owens Jr. on drums. These guys are amazingly skilled and fun to listen to.

10) Arborescence – Aaron Parks

Sound very introspective, a kind of similar to Keith Jarrett's old ECM albums. Extremely popular in Japan. My sister is a big fan of his. Well, as you probably know, you can sell well in Japan if you sound like Jarrett and technically sound.

Runners-up:

Extended Circle – Tord Gustavsen

In This Life – Virgil Donati

Brecker Brothers Band Reunion – Randy Brecker
