

THE UK'S BIGGEST SELLING JAZZ MAGAZINE

ISSUE 221 AUGUST 2017 £5.50

# Jazzwise

Magic in Marseille

## Ahmad Jamal

The French Connection

"The song is  
what matters"

## Liane Carroll

Love Conquers All

## Alexander Hawkins

United We Stand

## Dwight Trible

Spiritual Calling

## Polly Gibbons

Turning Point

## Chris Potter

Dreaming Big

Plus

Colin Stetson  
Jazzmeia Horn  
Kathrine Windfeld



# Wake-Up Call

Dynamic Dallas-born vocalist **Jazzmeia Horn** channels her straight talkin' perspectives on society's ills through her latest album, *A Social Call*, an authoritative collection drawing deep on her musical heritage. **Kevin Le Gendre** spoke with her about this most revealing collection of standards and how motherhood prepared her for the rigours of band leadership

**P**eople Make The World Go Round' has been gaining ground as an essential protest song for many years. A product of the great songwriting partnership of Thom Bell and Linda Creed, the soulful tilt at the powers that be was a hit for The Stylistics in 1972 but has since been covered by artists as disparate as Hortense Ellis, Ramsey Lewis, Milt Jackson and Innerzone Orchestra. And now Jazzmeia Horn.

In an extended spoken word prelude to her rendition of the piece, one of the highlights on her excellent debut album, *A Social Call*, the 25-year-old singer pulls no punches on the beaten down state of mankind, or rather our seemingly limitless capacity for self-inflicted wounds. "Nothing has changed. It's gotten worse, it's just a different time. There are more people coming into the earth, less food and less money. People are living and just going through the motions."

She sighs on the line from New York before she becomes more defiant. "But I don't have any filters, sometimes I'm too real. Ask me how I'm feeling and I really wanna say those things, because I am disturbed by them. But all the stuff that's happening, you know it's like the white elephant in the room, everybody knows it's there... or maybe not. You have to have the conversation, that was the purpose of the poem."

If Horn insists on straight talkin', then that ties in closely with her need to establish a clear cultural and historical framework for who she is and what she does. Horn has the kind of authoritative delivery, commanding tone and lithe phrasing of greats from Sassy to Betty, but it is also the astute choice of material and personal adaptation that imbue her debut with such power. A collection of epochal jazz and soul standards, from Jimmy Rowles/Norma

Winstone's 'The Peacocks/A Timeless Place' to Rose Royce's 'I'm Going Down' via Mongo Santamaria's 'Afro-Blue', the album has a marked political undercurrent, which reflects a wider double meaning. *A Social Call* is a wake-up call to society.

As far as Horn is concerned her debut has a classic repertoire for philosophical reasons. "Every single tune comes from some ancestor," says Horn, the daughter of musician parents and grandparents from Texas who weaned her on gospel music at their local church. She later attended the Booker T. Washington High School For The Performing & Visual Arts, an institution whose numerous illustrious alumni include the likes of Roy Hargrove, Erykah Badu and Edie Brickell, before moving to New York where she took up a scholarship at the New School Of Music.

"It could be an elder who hasn't even passed away, like Renee Marie, or I don't know, a Reggie Workman, or Betty Carter, who has passed... somebody like Louis Armstrong. 'Afro-Blue' is something that has already been stated, but I recorded it because I have a story to tell. This is who I am, that's exactly what the album is saying because nobody knows me. I can't just invite the world into a very private space in my mind where I create my own music. It might be a little overwhelming at first, so playing and arranging these standards gives you enough of me so that you understand where

Photo: Jacob Blickstein/staff.

TAKING OFF TAKING OFF TAKING OFF TAKING OFF TAKING OFF TAKING OFF TAKING KING

Kathrine Windfeld

# Bigger Visions

Danish pianist, composer and arranger **Kathrine Windfeld** is a rising star of the European jazz scene, not least for her bold writing for her adventurous big band. **Stuart Nicholson** spoke to her about the evolution toward her latest album, *Latency*

**O**ne of the striking differences between the UK jazz scene and most European countries is that big bands are so much more popular on the continent than they are here. Most countries maintain full-time jazz big bands, either directly funded by their arts and culture departments, such as France, Finland and Holland (who can boast the world's largest professional pop and jazz orchestra in the Metropole Orchestra), or are maintained by national or regional radio stations such as Germany's NDR Big Band in Hamburg, the WDR Big Band in Cologne, the SWR Big Band in Stuttgart, the Bulgarian Radio Big Band, the Danish Radio Big Band – well, the list goes on. The big band scene in Europe is a top down thing – most countries have two or three, some even more, full-time professional big bands and beneath them is a profusion of semi-professional and amateur ensembles.

Photo: Stephen Freiheit



I'm coming from. You understand the story that I'm telling, but you also understand that I'm paying homage to those who came before me. You have a better understanding of me because I'm singing songs that you can relate to... that you've already heard. That makes more sense than me just coming out and throwing my style at all of you at once."

Although Horn's triumph in the 2015 Thelonious Monk Institute competition marked her out as a soloist of considerable power she is keen to recognise that the working relationship she has with her band is an integral part of her artistic success. Again the Texas connection is strong. Pianist Victor Gould is actually the brother of one of her high school friends, while the highly respected elder in the horn section is trombonist Kuumba Frank Lacy, mainstay of the Mingus Dynasty band, who also hails from the Lone Star state. When I mention that Texas is significantly represented in contemporary jazz, by way of Robert Glasper and Jason Moran, Horn tells me that the latter has also been one of her essential mentors, if not life coaches, who has always been 'looking out for her'. If the singer has benefitted from the priceless guidance of others then she has also found herself in the position of giver and nurturer. She has two young children of her own.

"I love being a mother because I get to teach how I want to teach," she states with a chuckle. "My children are always with me. My two year-

old is very bossy. I didn't realise how bossy I was until the child came along. But when you lead a band you have to be the boss. She sees me lead a band of all males who are much bigger than me and much, much bigger than her, and she just watches. Yeah, motherhood, I love it. Sometimes I don't get privacy, but I love being a mother. I love little people that show me who I am."



## NG OIKING OFF TAKING OFF TAKING OFF TAKING OFF TAKING OFF TAKING OFF TAKING OFF

So for a completely new big band to suddenly arrive and start creating waves in an area of European jazz where there's not exactly a shortage of competition, then musicians, fans and critics sit-up and take notice.

Heads certainly turned when Kathrine Windfeld, a 30-year-old pianist, composer and arranger from Denmark released her debut album *Aircraft* (Stunt) in 2015, even though it was recorded before the band had appeared in public. Featuring her own compositions and arrangements, she promptly won a Danish Music Award for 'New Danish Artist of the Year', the album was nominated an 'Album of the Year' and she was put forward as 'Composer of the Year'. "It's quite common in Denmark, I think, to play in a big band," she reflects. "We have a lot of big bands, we have some professional big bands in Denmark playing original music and we have lots of amateur big bands, so it's quite common to play in a big band in Denmark."

Windfeld arrived at composing and arranging for a big band almost by accident. After high school she attended the The Rhythmic Conservatory in Copenhagen for a semester before taking a Bachelor degree in musicology at the University of Copenhagen: 'I guess I was always inspired by music – I have always composed for my quintet and there was a class I could take at University called 'Arranging for Big Band', and I tried it and thought it was amazing. If you

want to write on a larger scale – make possibilities with rhythmic layers, for example – the big band is a perfect format."

In 2012 she entered Malmö Music Conservatory in Sweden, and formed the first edition of her big band. "I wrote some scores at music school and I just started a band, I picked up the phone, I knew some musicians, but actually five or six players I called I didn't know, I just knew they were great players, so I just had to say: 'Hey, I'm Katherine, want to try and play my music?' So I had to be a bit brave, just to rely on people and get them together. So that's how it went and I think most of those people are still in the band." After that, things moved fast, her big band was hired for two seasons at Copenhagen's The Stand Jazz Club that led to her debut album.

After an impressive showcase at the 2016 Jazzahead! convention in Bremen, Windfeld felt ready to make her latest album. *Latency* (Stunt) reveals clear signs of artistic growth; ensembles are less dense, soloists more focused and the compositions are bold yet unpretentious. Unlike many emerging composers and arrangers, she avoids trying to reinvent the wheel, content to broadly work within traditional antiphonal big-band arranging methods with an occasional outside excursion. "I was not really attempting to make something really groundbreakingly new," she explains. "I just wanted to make something inside the tradition. I just wrote what I heard and thought was great music, so I guess I was really inspired by the hard-bop era – Cannonball Adderley and ii-V-i progressions and chord schemes

that people could recognise from other music. I have always been interested in polytonal and polymetric stuff so I think my development has been from the more traditional big band sounds towards more free, polytonal music, but still I keep clear melodies. *Latency* is a mixture of inside melodies, like 'Leaving Portland' that's really singable and easy to listen to, while there's some brutal riffs and strange harmonies on 'Double Fleisch' and 'Wasp', so I really wanted to try to make my own voice heard in the middle of all these inspirations."

With Windfeld's star very much in the ascendancy, a whole new world has opened up for her – this year she has had a work commissioned and played by the Danish Radio Big Band and is booked as artist-in-residence for the Coldarts New Talent Big Band in Holland and Prime Time Orchestra in Norway. Pausing to reflect on her new album, she speaks of her growing confidence in the art of composition and arranging: "*Latency* has more of a chill feeling, a more laidback feeling [than *Aircraft*]," she says. "I have become more secure and maybe more mature in my writing, and I dare to leave more space in some passages, I dare to make a long intro, to make some passages where it's only two instruments playing, so I think I have become more relaxed somehow – when I write a ballad I'm not afraid it might sound too cheesy, so I have become more secure in believing my ear as a composer and I am not concerned about what people may think, I just feel I have become more mature and I trust my ears more."