



**Joy**  
**Karin Krog & Friends (Sonet-Meantime)**  
 by Andrew Vélez

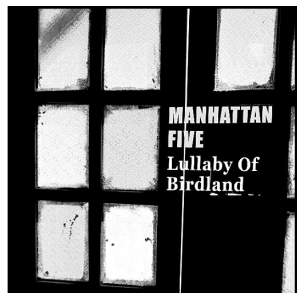
Norwegian songstress Karin Krog has been singing professionally for over five decades. Now in her 70s, her appearances stateside are too rare to satisfy her fervent following. The handful of 1968-69 sides heard on *Joy* are early in her career and are a good sampling of her adventurous style. Her voice can be airy, otherworldly and even cuddly. Keyboard and piano great Steve Kuhn, a frequent collaborator, once dubbed her “the national treasure of Norway”.

“Karin’s Mode” by Jan Garbarek, who also plays blazing tenor saxophone and rhythm instruments on the piece and elsewhere on the set, is a seminar on how special Krog’s sounds and explorations can be. Garbarek initially sets a swift pace before Krog comes in with a wordless wail, soaring and dipping, scating and improvising in a fashion all her own, sometimes reminiscent of African chanting. Garbarek comes back in for an extended, searingly hot and twisty sax solo before Krog soars and dips wordlessly again, throwing out more chirps and wails, until they may have fallen exhausted to the studio floor.

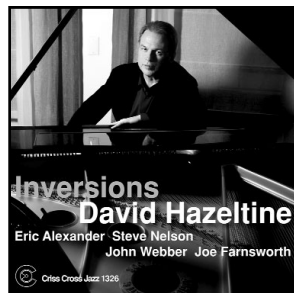
Just as impressive is Krog in a more straightahead fashion as when she does that sly gem “It’s A Lazy Afternoon” in a sleepily seductive manner. “Round About Midnight” is another beauty on this set. Here she benefits from the dual basses of Palle Danielsson and Arild Andersen. The setting is spare and her delivery is uncluttered, radiating the kind of gripping simplicity of Billie Holiday, circa *Lady in Satin* days. Krog heard Holiday live early on and her influence is evident in her no-frills approach.

Among other jazz singers, perhaps Sheila Jordan is the closest cousin to Krog. Both demand some getting used to, but once on their wavelengths, the rewards are uncommon and considerable.

For more information, visit [karinkrog.no](http://karinkrog.no)



**Lullaby of Birdland**  
**Manhattan Five**  
 (M&I Music)



**Inversions**  
**David Hazeltine**  
 (Criss Cross Jazz)

by Ken Dryden

Steve Nelson has been an in-demand player since the mid ‘80s, the vibraphonist working with Kenny Barron, Mulgrew Miller, Bobby Watson, David “Fathead” Newman, Johnny Griffin, Jackie McLean, George Shearing Quintet and Dave Holland, to name just a few, in addition to seven CDs as a leader. A native of Pittsburgh, Nelson is recognized for a driving hardbop approach to his instrument.

Japanese guitarist Satoshi Inoue recruited four veterans for the Manhattan Five to salute the aforementioned Shearing Quintet. Since Nelson recorded and toured as a member of that group in the mid ‘90s, he was likely very familiar with many of the

songs. The rest of the band includes the brilliant pianist Benny Green and the much-coveted rhythm team of bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington (no relation). Inoue wrote new arrangements of the ten standards drawn from Shearing’s repertoire and his potent guitar fits the Shearing style perfectly. The delicately swinging treatment of the pianist’s hit title track and an intricate setting of “Conception” are highlighted by the work of Green and Nelson. Nelson’s spacious, bluesy feature in “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes” and infectious contribution to “Mambo Inn” are also delightful. Fans of the now-retired Shearing will rejoice in this tribute.

Earlier this year Nelson recorded with pianist David Hazeltine on *Inversions*, with tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, bassist John Webber and drummer Joe Farnsworth. Hazeltine has long been a productive soloist and bandleader, yet remains an underrated composer. He captures the essence of Cedar Walton in his lively tribute “For Cedar”. Nelson recalls Milt Jackson with his driving solo in the late vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery’s “Aki’s Blues” and he is extensively featured in the interpretation of “Loverman”, blending lush phrasing and uptempo runs in his long solo. Nelson also sizzles in Hazeltine’s brisk, Latin-flavored title composition, followed by Alexander’s intense feature.

For more information, visit [eastwindimport.com](http://eastwindimport.com) and [crisscrossjazz.com](http://crisscrossjazz.com). Nelson is at *Dizzy’s Club* Nov. 16th-21st with *Renee Rosnes* and Nov. 30th with *Mulgrew Miller*. See *Calendar*.



**Eponymous**  
**Henrik Walsdorff Trio (Jazzwerkstatt)**  
 by Ken Waxman

Part of the creative firmament that makes up Berlin’s lively jazz scene, alto saxophonist Henrik Walsdorff gigs with bands big and small, including SoKo Steidle, The Real Latinos, LAX and Ulrich Gumpert’s octet. This album is particularly impressive: capturing nearly 64 minutes of intuitive improvising exactly as played by the leader, bassist Jonas Westergaard and drummer Christian Lillinger. Despite its length, tempo and pitch changes ensure that the interaction is constantly stimulating.

Ranging from raucous to restrained, the themes are as often chromatic as contrapuntal. Carefully connected, at points the lines accelerate or slow down so subtly that the trio is involved with new improvisations almost before the realization that the beat has changed sinks in. Possessing a sharp, staccato tone, Walsdorff’s mercurial solos often echo later period Art Pepper as well as the expected Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy. That means he’s equally comfortable outputting near-boppish harmonies as detonating strident chirps or emphasized split tones. For his part Lillinger varies his accompaniment accordingly, with press rolls, ratamacues and thick rebounds prominent at some points and cross-handed pops and rim shots elsewhere. Meanwhile, where needed, Westergaard deals with concentrated strumming or traditional walking. His high-pitched, near-the-scroll plucks break up the time, helping create inventive dissonance, further projected by the drummer’s rim rasps and opposite sticking plus Walsdorff’s pressurized slurs and glottal punctuation.

With the session captured in real time, the trio

reaches a climax on the concluding “Stück 4”. A cornucopia of bell-shaking, thumping backbeats, banjo-like string strokes and pitch-sliding reed tones, the ending is defined when the saxophonist puts aside multiphonics and tongue-fluttering for narrowed trills and an eventual fade. On evidence provided by discs like this, is it any wonder that Berlin’s jazz scene is burgeoning and healthy, almost challenging New York in the sheer number of inventive players?

For more information, visit [jazzwerkstatt.eu](http://jazzwerkstatt.eu). Walsdorff is at *Irondale Center* Nov. 28th with this trio and also with *Ulrich Gumpert* as part of the *Berlin-New York Festival*. See *Calendar*.



**Guts**  
**Mark Dresser (Kadima Collective)**  
 by Fred Bouchard

Mark Dresser, a daring personage of contemporary acoustic bass these 35 years, comes forward as a ‘modest missionary’ with a four-part tutorial/performance zooming judiciously toward the outer reaches of his instrument, in most cases a Hammond-Ashley five-string. Despite the visceral roles traditionally assigned (Bach to Blanton) to the contrabass violin and the provocatively anatomical booklet art of Sara Jane Lapp, the nature of Dresser’s hard-won revelations have less to do with plungers and plumbing than careering serenely through the eerie stratospheres of upper partials.

Dresser gives us distinct aspects of his artistry: *Investigations* (31 minutes of Dresser narrating highlights of his musical autobiography); *Guts* (49 minutes of unearthly solo studies); *Explorations* (55 minutes of engaging conversation with Roger Reynolds, colleague and composer/collaborator at UC San Diego) and *Explanations* (65 minutes of Dresser instructing bassists in tackling harmonics, multiphonics, bitones and other arcane original techniques such as gritty multiphonic chords, enchanting falsetto flautando, two-handed pizzicato and grooving harmonics). Extras include PDF files of Dresser’s essays on bass pedagogy, sheet music and Lapp’s artwork.

To focus broadly on the performances in *Guts*, Dresser’s music impresses diversely as introspective, mystical and daring, poetic yet ominous, cosmic yet intimate. With his wide spectrum of fingerings and bowings, he makes his overdub-free acoustic basses sound variously like whale song, propeller plane (flying or in a tailspin), wasp swarm, steel saw, bellowing banshee, hummingbird wings, robots marching, Cachao, Mingus, Petrouchka’s Shrovetide fair, radio transmitters, leapfrogging hobgoblins, distant thunder, katydids. The two Reynolds pieces, one pizzicato and one bowed, seem to be the date’s most ‘traditional’. Bassists will delve into Dresser’s dazzling, revelatory sonic galaxy while all but the most adventuresome listeners will shelve it.

For more information, visit [kadimacollective.com](http://kadimacollective.com). Dresser is at *Klavierhaus* Nov. 5th, *The Stone* Nov. 7th and *Cornelia Street Café* Nov. 28th. See *Calendar*.