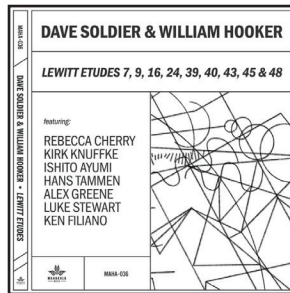


A Lovesome Thing
Geri Allen & Kurt Rosenwinkel
(Heartcore/Motéma Music)
by Ken Dryden

The pairing of pianist Geri Allen and guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel took both musicians outside of their usual group settings, though their chemistry must have been obvious to them from the first time they played together. Only one duo booking (at NYC's since-defunct Jazz Standard) preceded their 2012 concert in Paris, captured here, live at the Philharmonie de Paris. Both musicians enjoyed playing in a free-flowing manner that allowed plenty of room for improvising. The extended performances from this concert are a joy, with no wasted space, nor any danger of either one of them running out of ideas or taking one chorus too many. Allen lost her battle with cancer in 2017 at age 60, before they could meet in the studio to record what would be their second album, but this recent release is welcome news. Although the Paris Philharmonic is a large cultural center, the venue (and location of the concert within it) features great acoustics and, from the reaction of an appreciative audience, infers an intimate, magical setting no matter the actual size of the space. Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" has never sounded so lush, with Allen's rhapsodic chords fueling Rosenwinkel's moving guitar lines. "Embraceable You", an oft-recorded favorite of jazz musicians, finds the duo delivering a fresh approach with an intricate improvised introduction

that gradually reveals its theme. The pair take their time exploring the timeless melody to embellish it in an intricate, often surprising manner that's far from more typical interpretations. Rosenwinkel's "Simple #2" is a jaunty vehicle that suggests a breezy spring day with its upbeat nature. Thelonious Monk's "Ruby My Dear", often subject to workmanlike treatment, is elevated by the guitarist's solo introduction that weaves a mesmerizing improvisation, briefly hinting at the melody, which is only revealed upon Allen's entrance. The two also retain the composer's playfulness while embellishing the number with their unique voicings. The pianist's constantly shifting "Open Handed Reach", the final track, provides ample proof of Geri Allen's creativity as a composer, providing a breathtaking finale to a concert that is one for the ages.

For more info visit heartcore-records.com. Rosenwinkel is at *Village Vanguard* Feb. 13-18. See Calendar.



LeWitt Etudes
Dave Soldier and William Hooker (Mahakala Music)
by Andrew Hamlin

The late conceptual artist Sol LeWitt was particularly famous for his wall drawings; the artist even left instructions for others to create work like his, in ways of keeping with their own tastes and skills. In that spirit, multi-instrumentalist Dave Soldier took inspiration from LeWitt and his wall drawings to set down a series of 50 "Etudes", and with each a textual set of rules,

avoiding standard notation nor advocating a standard musical process. Like the intent of the visual artist, Soldier's work is meant to inspire musical adventures by groups of any level of playing in any tradition. He's recorded other versions of the "Etudes" and this latest one features drummer William Hooker, who's been making music with Soldier for decades. Hooker is a genre-defying drummer who's been a veteran of NYC's free improvisation scene since the mid '70s. He can thunder when the spirit moves him but also has the smarts, wisdom and respect for his colleagues to leave them space. Predictably, Hooker's powerful-yet-nuanced drumming had a pointed effect on the dynamics of each piece.

In "Etude 40", an epic freighter's-horn drone with the potential to turn into "Also sprach Zarathustra", has that drone with Soldier's violin teasing in the background. Horns join, drop out and drop in again. Bassists Luke Stewart and Ken Filiano saw through that deep end, and when Hooker steps in—around the five-minute mark—his play is unobtrusive, almost inaudible, while Soldier slowly builds his own storm. The piece is a good example of how each rendition of an "Etude" can contain a multitude of ideas. "Etude 43", the only piece delivered in two distinct takes, spins out through "version one" as a series of solo outings. Then, like a multi-voiced singalong, the players contribute their own individual but collective voicings. One violin trades a sweet, mournful legato lick with tenor saxophonist Ayumi Ishito; plucked bass comes in, then more sounds of basso foghorn drones and Alex Greene volunteers a delicate piano statement.

For those who appreciate innovation and free jazz, this music is compelling. It's an as-intended adventure, an odyssey delivered without notion of intellectual trappings.

For more info visit mahakalamusic.com. Hooker and Soldier are at *Bowery Poetry Club* Feb. 7; Hooker is also at *Theater for the New City* (part of *Arts for Art's Out Music Festival*) Feb. 4. See Calendar.

ON SCREEN



Dr. Eddie Henderson: Uncommon Genius
Directed by Michelle Bauer Carpenter
(Salina Star Route)
by Jim Motavalli

The new documentary, *Dr. Eddie Henderson: Uncommon Genius* is about one of jazz' greatest trumpet players and offers many valuable insights into this multi-faceted man and musician. Judging by his talking head interviews, he's also his own best biographer. But be warned, there's unfortunately precious little performance footage in this short film. Only at the end of this work by Michelle Bauer Carpenter (director, editor and co-producer), do we get live music in the form of a brief excerpt from a fairly recent in-performance video shot at NYC's Smoke Jazz Club with Henderson, Donald Harrison (alto), George Cables (piano), Gerald Cannon (bass) and Lenny White (drums). And it's great—Henderson proves he is still, unquestionably, in top form.

There are also brief snippets of Dr. Henderson's

parents, both whom are also performers. As the good doctor tells it, very engagingly, his mother was a Cotton Club dancer who performed with her twin sister (and Fats Waller) and his father was a member of the Charioteers singing group—regulars on *The Bing Crosby Show*. Henderson was born in New York in 1940, and inherited his uncle's trumpet. There was stardust from the beginning. Mom and Sarah Vaughan took the young Eddie backstage to see Louis Armstrong at a gig, who right then and there "taught me how to make a sound on the trumpet." A year later, Henderson was back, and knocked Armstrong out of his chair with "Flight of the Bumble Bee". A note from Satchmo encouraged the youngster: "Keep playing, you sure sound beautiful."

But jazz had to wait, because the young Henderson became entranced with ice shows and figure skating, studied with Richard "Mr. Debonair" Dwyer (also an interviewee), and was soon doing double axels. Despite huge racial barriers at that time, he ended up winning bronze medals in major skating competitions. Henderson's stepfather in San Francisco was a physician to jazz stars, including Miles Davis, who took the young trumpeter to a gig in his Ferrari. On the bandstand were both Cannonball Adderley and John Coltrane, with the famed jazz rhythm trio of Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers and "Philly" Joe Jones. "They were like avatars up there, superhuman beings," Henderson says. "I became a Miles Davis fanatic." Henderson enrolled at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music,

where he was classically trained, meaning he still needed to learn how to improvise. His teachers in that art included Freddie Hubbard and Lee Morgan. At another point in his life, Henderson was following his father into medicine by day and hitting the jazz clubs at night, eventually earning his M.D. The story of how Henderson joined Herbie Hancock for five and a half years after putting his budding career as a psychiatrist on hold is alone worth the price of this short movie's admission. Insightful interviews come from drummer Billy Hart—who was impressed by Henderson's ability to sight read—Cables, Harrison and drummer Mike Clark. The documentary is on the abbreviated side at only 27 minutes, and lacks not only performance footage, but an interview with Hancock or information about Henderson's post-Hancock career. The trumpeter made his first solo album, *Realization*, in 1973 (for the Allman Brothers' Capricorn label) and it's a pioneering electric date, with many of his Mwandishi bandmates. Henderson, who also worked with McCoy Tyner, Hubbard, Kenny Barron and Benny Golson, took part in Hancock reunions, and resumed his medical career. And, as he once told me, bought a bunch of Ferraris: Miles Davis was obviously influential in more ways than one.

For more info visit uncommongenius.us. A screening of *Uncommon Genius* is at *Smoke* Feb. 7; Henderson plays at *Smoke* Feb. 7-11 and is at *Birdland with The Cookers* Feb. 27 - Mar. 2. See Calendar.