



CRITIQUE

RATINGS SCALE



HUMAN ELEMENT HUMAN ELEMENT

GARY NOVAK has played with Chick Corea, Allan Holdsworth, and Alanis Morissette, but Human Element is his first outing as a joint leader. The album's Weather Report-meets-2070 fusion gives this drumming enigma plenty of room to set the joint on fire. "Izzy"

offers scalding hyper-bop leavened by Novak's textural dynamics, blazing-fast stickings, and gorgeous tom smashes. The title track plies drum 'n' bass burn and straight-ahead overdrive, with Novak swinging like Elvin channeling a Jedi knight. The drummer's pocket is deep and wide when required, as on "Cut" and "Speak With Your Eye," the latter unleashing a feel so perfect it could slice ice. Gary Novak defies gravity. (Abstract Logix) **Ken Micallef**

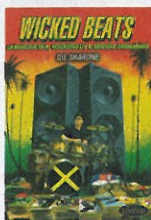


BLUE COUPE TORNADO ON THE TRACKS

Drummer **ALBERT BOUCHARD** helped to conjure Blue Öyster Cult's image as grand wizards of sci-fi-inspired sludge rock, through his inventive tom

phrasing, steady timekeeping, and compositional skills. With his new project, Blue Coupe, featuring brother and former BÖC bassist Joe Bouchard, former Alice Cooper bassist/songwriting collaborator Dennis Dunaway, and Doors guitarist Robby Krieger, Bouchard hasn't lost his touch. On supernatural-themed originals and covers, he lays down solid grooves and easily shifts feels, suggesting beat displacement. Blue Coupe isn't a BÖC clone, but the music's strong rhythmic foundation and haunting, if at times satirical, lyrical content recall classic Cult. (bluecoupeband.com) **Will Romano**

MULTIMEDIA



WICKED BEATS FEATURING GIL SHARONE DVD LEVEL: ALL \$24.99

Wicked Beats lives up to its name. Gil Sharone's enthusiasm for Jamaican ska, rocksteady, and reggae is contagious, and the drummer offers ample practical and technical knowledge here. He keeps it all within reach, demonstrating, for instance, how varying the hi-hat parts alone changes the beats. Sharone also wisely invites the contributions of several important experts in the field, giving greater depth to the discussion. Historian Roger Steffens brings cultural perspective to the music, beginning with the heart-beat rhythm, Nyabingi. Sharone blazes on a cool reverse rimclick technique and then introduces the beat's inventor, Lloyd Knibb (Skatalites). And Carlton "Santa" Davis (Peter Tosh, Ziggy Marley) shows off his patented hi-hat groove, "the flying cymbal." The performances shine, and even the bonus scenes—covering dancehall patterns, hip-hop/reggae fusion, the use of dynamics, and getting tones—are awesome. (Hudson) **Robin Tolleson**

MD CONTRIBUTOR ROUNDUP

by Ilya Stemkovsky



MD 2011 Pro Panelist **PETER ERSKINE**'s total command of phrasing and absolute musicality come through on *Standards 2: Movie Music*. His easy swing on *West Side Story*'s "Somewhere" and rolling, snares-off solo on "Cinema Paradiso" are the work of a sensitive master taking his time and winning the race in the end anyway. (fuzzymusic.com)



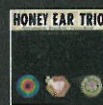
Longtime *MD* contributor **MIKE HAID** is perfectly over the top on Michael Harris's aptly titled *Tranz-Fused*, ripping huge tom fills and tight double bass work, all within the first thirty seconds of "Seizure Salad." The backbeat's not forgotten, though, as on the nasty half-time shuffle of "Nitrous Oxide Strut." **Marco Minnemann** also appears, on two tracks. (lionmusic.com)



Sharing the Freedom, the U.S. Air Force Academy Band's set of standards and originals, is the sound of an excellent big band, swinging and full of life. *MD* columnist **TSGT HENRIQUE DE ALMEIDA** drums with precise ghosting, killer hi-hat work, and some wicked soloing on "Yesterday's Tomorrow." (www.usafacademyband.af.mil)



Live at Blues Alley from the Army Blues Jazz Ensemble is another swinging big band session, this one in front of a 2010 Washington, D.C., audience. **MSG STEVE FIDYK** (see his recent *Jazz Drummer's Workshop* articles in *MD*) plays his backside off, kicking the tunes into high gear with a burning ride cymbal and well-placed bombs. (usarmyband.com/blues)



Honey Ear Trio's *Steampunk Serenade* features an avant-jazz sax/bass/drums lineup, with 2011 *MD* Pro Panelist **ALLISON MILLER** playing big grooves ("Olney 60/30") and caressing her snare and cymbals with an assured touch ("High Water"). Check out Alli's control with the tempo changes in "Six Nettes." (honeyeartrio.com)



MD scribe **VINNIE ZUMMO** (this past February's "Making Drum Loops" article) is mainly known as a guitar player with Joe Jackson, but his all-pocket, no-frills drumming is solid on *Swinging Guitar Sounds of Young America*, his latest disc of retro-style jazz, rock, and everything else. Guest drummers include **Ray Marchica, Gary Burke, Shawn Pelton, Matty Amendola, Bashiri Johnson, and Steve Merola**. (vinniezummo.com)



MD contributor **ROBIN TOLLESON**'s syncopated kick and vintage-sounding snare groove mighty hard on the Secret B-Sides' infectious blend of hip-hop, old-school R&B, and slinky funk. *Flowers & Chocolate* is a soul party on disc, and the drummer grasps the idea of using space and knows just when to open the hi-hats. (thesecretb-sides.com)