



**Hôtel Du Nord**

Sylvie Courvoisier/Mark Feldman Quartet (Intakt)  
by John Sharpe

It's not clear whether *Hôtel Du Nord*, the second outing from the accomplished Sylvie Courvoisier/Mark Feldman Quartet, pays homage to Marcel Carné's 1938 film of that name, but the same mix of poetic realism and existential doom permeates the proceedings nonetheless. The husband and wife/violinist and pianist team, supplemented by bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Gerry Hemingway, have developed an already strong conception even further since 2010's *To Fly To Steal* (Intakt). Two pieces by each of the principals are rounded off by three improvisations. But what is remarkable is that the collectively-birthing cuts seem not only completely integrated into the program, but form some of the most structured passages. It's as if the band needs the idiosyncratic compositions to disrupt their easy fluency to get to new places.

And those new locales are certainly worth reaching. On the title track, the dream-like state is interrupted by dramatic gestures, which give the feel of a surrealist painting made into sound. Sometimes plaintive, sometimes strident, Feldman's classical technique extends to microtones, high controlled squeals and skipping plucked motifs. Courvoisier is

measured and spacious, contributing to the ascetic chamber air, but also stretches the envelope with unconventional practices, such as taping down the strings inside her piano, then slowly pulling off the tape, with the sustain pedal depressed, creating eerie strums on "Gowanus".

The album avoids the traditional rhythm-section-and-leaders mold. There is a music where restrained gesture assumes great significance, so when an emphatic ostinato intrudes on the spare unearthly soundscape of "Dunes", it seems shocking. In credit to the disciplined group ethos, the extemporized "Inceptions" is the most straightforward piece on the disc: starting with forthright violin and concluding with a jazzy 4/4 from bass and drums, via an Eastern-tinged bowed melody and a rippling piano solo.

For more information, visit [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch). Courvoisier and Feldman are at The Stone Dec. 6th. See Calendar.



**Signature Time**

Laszlo Gardony (Sunnyside)  
by Terrell Holmes

*Signature Time* has an impressive diversity. Although the Hungarian-born pianist Laszlo Gardony takes his primary musical influences from Africa, he presents an

all-embracing musical spectrum that contains colors from classical, gospel, Dixieland and rock.

The range of Gardony's originals underscore his inspirations. "With You at the Bridge" flows easily, Gardony adding shifting textures to his barrel-chested chords. "On African Land" reaffirms Gardony's love for African rhythms as he lights up the keyboard with swift, articulate runs. Yoron Israel's percussion - on drums and vibraharp - and John Lockwood's musing, ethereal bass highlight the haunting ECM avatar "Silent Words" and the lovely "Under the Sky". And if these songs are somber, "Bourbon Street Boogie" comes straight from Mardi Gras. The band has a ball, with Gardony's juke joint grooving ably accompanied by gumbo-steeped tenor sax player Stan Strickland.

Gardony applies the same creativity to standards. On a deep blue version of Billy Strayhorn's "Johnny Come Lately" Strickland cleverly plays his feathery tenor just behind the beat of the melody to accentuate the song's title while George Shearing's "Lullaby of Birdland", played over a pulsating vamp, reaches another level of fluency and fluidity.

Quite possibly, though, Gardony has the most fun deconstructing (or reconstructing) Beatles songs. The trio's rendition of "Lady Madonna" is delightfully gospel-inflected; it sounds like this lady found her sanctuary beneath a tent at a revival meeting. And there's definitely no loneliness or despair to be found in the spicy take on "Eleanor Rigby" as Gardony moves the song from dirge to dance floor.

Balance is the key to this album's success. The pitch-perfect fusion of styles and tempos makes *Signature Time* a definite winner.

For more information, visit [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com). Gardony is at Birdland Dec. 8th. See Calendar.

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