

# The Jazz Mix

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Top 10 lists pepper the Internet each December, and those for rock music are especially prevalent. No disrespect to rock musicians, but we decided to ask Eddie Becton for his list of the top 10 jazz releases of 2011. Becton is the producer and host of *"The Jazz Journey,"* a weekly radio program on LMU's *KXLU* that airs Sundays from 7 – 8 p.m. at 88.9 FM. He has interviewed many jazz greats including Ahmad Jamal, Charlie Haden, Stanley Jordan, Ginny and Monica Mancini and Nicholas Payton, many others. Since 1999, he has taught "History of Jazz in America" in the Department of African American Studies. Becton gave us nine for 2011 but couldn't resist making his 10th a favorite from 2010.

## Billy Bang, "Black Man's Blues/New York Collage"

Violinist Billy Bang has always had a penchant for creativity and unabashedly stretching perceived boundaries in jazz. His arrangements represent the true essence of jazz, i.e., improvisation, freedom, and playing "in the moment."

## Gary Burton, "Common Ground"

Vibraphonist Gary Burton has been at the forefront of jazz for several decades, and he does not disappoint here. This disc is a fresh addition to Burton's vast discography. It's fresh, melodic, and it swings.

## Charlie Haden and Hank Jones, "Come Sunday"

What do you get when you pair two of jazz's most formidable musicians to record a duet of classic spirituals and hymns? Well, you get 14 tunes guaranteed to stir your soul, not to mention how the tunes remind us of the relationship between spirituals and jazz.

## René Marie, "Black Lace Freudian Slip"

I never tire from hearing vocalist Marie's CDs, as they are always astute, insightful and aurally delicious. Great lyrics, outstanding band and just plain ol' good!

## Christian McBride Big Band, "The Good Feeling"

This is a great CD for listeners who enjoy a classic big-band production, and McBride delivers mightily. Big band and big sound from an all-star cast of musicians.

## Phil Ranelin, "Perseverance"

Trombonist Phil Ranelin is a staple on the Los Angeles jazz scene, and "Perseverance" is his latest output. As usual, Ranelin surrounds himself with a stellar band, including master drummer Big Black.

## Josh Rzepka, "Into The Night"

Rzepka is a young trumpeter who has a command of jazz's history, yet he manages to put his own spin on some wonderful arrangements. This kid has chops indeed, and he'll undoubtedly get even better as years pass.

## Poncho Sanchez and Terence Blanchard, "Chano Y Dizzy!"

A musical tribute to greats Chano Pozo and Dizzy Gillespie, this disc is resplendent with swinging rhythms so central to Afro-Cuban jazz. Fans of Sanchez and Blanchard will surely enjoy this disc, and aficionados of Pozo and Gillespie will revel in the fact that Afro-Cuban jazz is alive and well.

## Marcus Shelby, "Soul of the Movement"

Bassist extraordinaire, Marcus Shelby pens yet another spirited, culturally significant piece — akin to Duke Ellington's "tone poems" — to musically recreate places, periods and historical events. In this case, Shelby crafts arrangements that capture the Civil Rights Movement with a particular nod to Martin Luther King, Jr. Skillful, powerful and, at times, pensive, this is a great disc accompanied by detailed liner notes.

## Cassandra Wilson, "Silver Pony"

Although hers is a 2010 release, I have to include this gem. Wilson's deep, mellifluous voice, backed by a stellar band, is just too good to pass up. She's sultry as usual on this disc, and her signature voice on "Silver Moon" is worth the price of admission.

Think there's some release Eddie Becton overlooked? Put it in a comment below and tell us why your favorite cd belongs on Eddie's list.



Eddie Becton hosts the "The Jazz Journey" at KXLU.