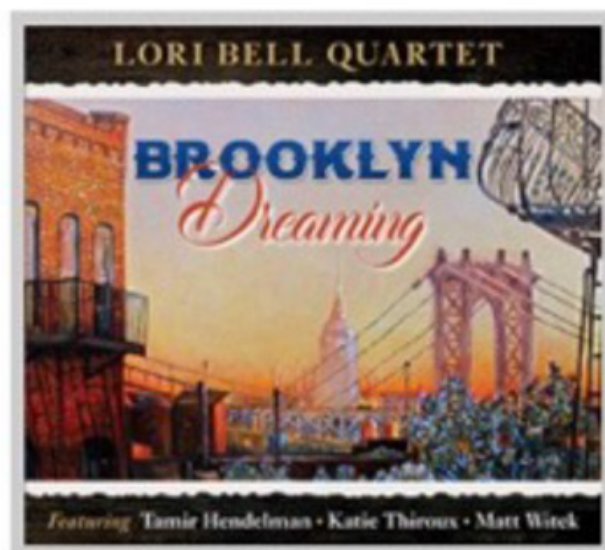


Editors' Picks

JANUARY 2016



BY BRIAN ZIMMERMAN

Lori Bell Quartet, *Brooklyn Dreaming* (Self Release)

West Coast flutist Lori Bell has been quietly amassing acclaim as a composer and improviser for the past three decades. Daughter of a bandleader father and an accordion-playing mother, she grew up in a music-filled household in Brooklyn. As a youngster, she would take the train to Manhattan to hear jazz in the tiny clubs of Greenwich Village. On

Brooklyn Dreaming, her ninth album, Bell returns to her Big Apple roots for a nine-track program featuring six bold originals and three New York-centric interpretations. Bell's playing is lithe and energetic, her lines unspooling with ease. But she's also an improvisational shapeshifter. On "Times Squared," she transitions seamlessly between rapidly tongued staccato blasts and relaxed legato sighs. On "Streets Of New York," she skips from hardnosed modal lines to graceful swing motifs with a clean, collected assurance. She is joined on this outing by a formidable ensemble: bassist Katie Theroux, an emerging talent from California; drummer Matt Witek, formerly of the John Pizzarelli Quartet; and pianist Tamir Hendelman, who has performed and recorded with the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra. The group interprets "Harlem Nocturne," "52nd Street Theme" and "Nostalgia In Times Square" with a New York state of mind, bringing buoyancy and brio to each tune. Bell's originals are catchy, fresh and revealing. Throughout the program, her distinct flute voice soars, bearing a distinctly "Brooklyn" accent.

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DOWNBEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

SINCE 1934

Lori Bell Quartet *Brooklyn Dreaming*

SELF RELEASE

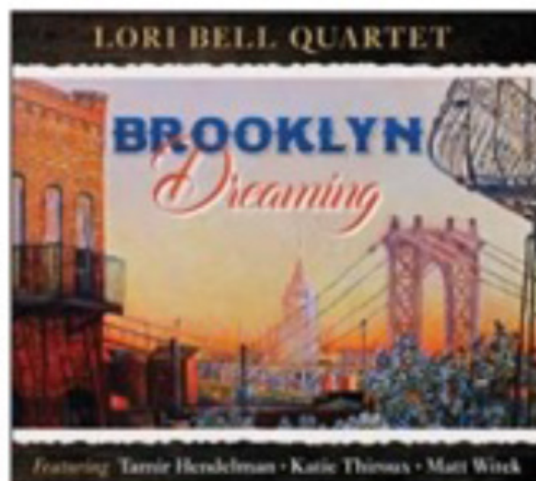
★★★★

Flutist-composer-arranger Lori Bell pays tribute to her hometown in this collection of originals and NYC-themed jazz standards. With an accomplished and empathetic rhythm section of Katie Thiroux on bass, Tamir Hendelman on piano and Matt Witek on drums, Bell flaunts prodigious chops on both C flute and alto flute, though her pen might be mightier than her sword.

Her originals like the midtempo swinger "Streets Of New York," her lovely jazz waltz "Brooklyn Dreaming" and her quirky, Monk-ish uptempo blues "A Dog On Coney" all reveal a wide harmonic palette, a sophisticated rhythmic sensibility and a refined sense of dynamics, along with an urge to swing. Several of her pieces morph in subtle ways, like her shifting from a busy 12/8 to solid 4/4 walking groove on "Lower Manhattan," or her "A Night In Tunisia"-like segue from Afro-Cuban to straight-up 4/4 blues on "Streets Of New York."

Regarding her sidemen for this copasetic session, Thiroux is a reliably swinging bassist with a resounding tone, while Hendelman is a bop-informed burner of the highest order. Witek is a remarkably versatile drummer skilled with brushes, and all are melodic and effortless improvisers.

—Bill Milkowski



Brooklyn Dreaming: Nostalgia In Times Square; Times Squared; 52nd Street Theme; Streets Of New York; Brooklyn Dreaming; A Dog On Coney; Lower Manhattan; 3 Deuce Blues; Harlem Nocturne. (48:00)

Personnel: Lori Bell, C flute, alto flute; Tamir Hendelman, piano; Katie Thiroux, bass; Matt Witek, drums.

Ordering info: loribellflute.com

Lori Bell: Brooklyn Dreaming



1,707 views



RECOMMEND IT!

By **DAN BILAWSKY**

No matter where we go, our formative experiences travel with us. That's what Lori Bell appears to say with *Brooklyn Dreaming*. For her ninth album, this California-based flutist decided to glance eastward, recalling time spent soaking in the sounds of New York City with her musical family in her youth. The result? A love letter that proves that Bell has bi-coastal jazz citizenship, having been baptized in Brooklyn's swing and sizzle while currently belonging to the hot Golden State scene.

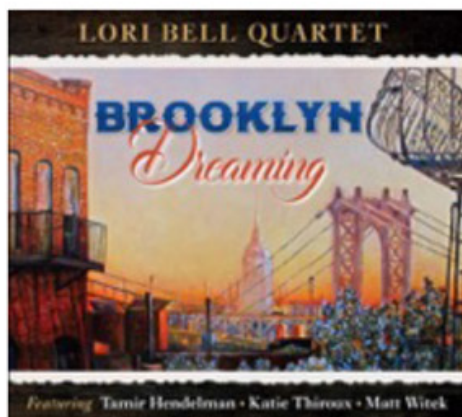
Brooklyn Dreaming is clearly Bell's baby, but her band mates deserve equal credit for bringing this music to life. She's joined by a trio of West Coast rhythm aces—Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra-associated pianist Tamir Hendelman, rising star drummer Matt Witek, and bassist Katie Thiroux, a hot topic since self-releasing her debut and being selected as a semi-finalist in the 2015 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition for vocalists. Together, these three expertly navigate their way through six Bell creations and three covers that all fit the New York-centric theme.

While Brooklyn holds Bell's heart and gets top billing here, only a pair of pieces—the airy, calmly waltzing title track and an angular, swinging ode to enjoying a Nathan's hot dog on Coney Island—reference that borough. Six of the seven other numbers are firmly planted in Manhattan by name. The album starts in the tourist-filled heart of New York City, referencing Times Square not once, but twice. Charles Mingus' famed "Nostalgia in Times Square," opening with some incredibly tasty brushwork from Witek, kicks things off, and Bell's own "Times Squared," a wonderful slice of chilled-out funk ushered in with a rubato preface, follows it. As the album continues, Bell moves all around the city. A perky and spicy look at Thelonious Monk's "52nd Street Theme" and a hip "3 Deuce Blues" both nod to the same stretch of jazz clubs that's no longer with us; an inventive take on "Harlem Nocturne," shifting from a mysterious feel in five to a comfortable swing, looks further uptown; and a Latin-ized "Lower Manhattan" points in the opposite direction.

Bell glides, glows, and runs up and down her flute in seemingly effortless fashion throughout. Her rhythm mates, in turn, keep the grooves swinging and flowing while adding their two cents in all the right places. *Brooklyn Dreaming* is a tight and classy affair that furthers Bell's fine reputation, shines a spotlight on her talented compatriots, and reminds us all that east and west aren't so far apart after all.

JazzdaGama

Lori Bell Quartet *Brooklyn Dreaming*



This is a fascinating jazz recital – once again – from Lori Bell, including Tamir Hendelman again, as well as the supremely talented bassist Katie Thiroux and drummer Matt Witek. It is cunningly programmed, with Charles Mingus' Nostalgia in Times Square and Thelonious Monk's 52nd Street Theme placed up front so as to give maximum impact to its quiet tremolo-infused lead character at the opening: Lori Bell's flute, that pulls you into a distinctly unnerving world, one which the entry of that flute, with its vague, long-limbed lines, does nothing to ameliorate. It's all the more mind-blowing when you realise that the Mingus and Monk pieces, these visionary, transcendent pieces are particularly well suited to Ms Bell's tensile, wiry sound, which leads her lends her lines an immediacy and intensity that you also find her extrapolations of the themes engendered in those pieces as well as in the profoundly beautiful Harlem Nocturne that closed the album.

It is inevitable in the more intense passages of those, as well as Lori Bell's own compositions, that these players are most compelling, though there is no shortage of virtuosity either, particularly in the finale of Harlem Nocturne. As a quartet there is much to impress too not the least in their sensitive approach to rubato in Ms. Bell's *Brooklyn Dreaming*, one player unerringly mirroring the other. That goes for each and every player who, in his or her own way, becomes the bedrock of this tight ensemble – introverted in the more thoughtful pieces and justifiably extroverted in the ones that have a different air about them – like 3 Deuces Blues, for instance. I could not have imagined a warmer, richer flute sound – Lori Bell refulgent alongside Katie Thiroux – in that piece as well as in pieces where a lightening of mood and wit also prevail. However, I submit that it's still reactive, involving interpretation and a reminder of riches that Ms Bell always bequeaths to the flute.

Lori Bell stands out even in the crowded market of younger flute players. She impressed enormously with her last outing *The Music of Djavan* (Resonance, 2008). Her tone is remarkably pure, with an inner steel audible in her control of intonation over larger spans. Her playing reminds me of Yusef Lateef sometimes and it would be interesting to hear how she would tackle the more adventurous repertoire that the late genius was known for. Ms. Bell has a position among virtuosos of her generation and always leaves mementos of her artistry whenever she puts the flute to her lips, a very physical and sensuous act as the music that comes out of it will testify. She has been aided by the crisp playing of her pianist Tamir Hendelman – on the last two discs and the pianist too never fails to give winningly fresh accounts of the music before him. On this new disc, the two are joined by two more supremely talented and sensitive artists – the ever wonderful bassist, Katie Thiroux and the sensitive drummer Matt Witek.

This is an album that pays tribute to 'the scene' as a Bebop player might call Brooklyn, the heartbeat of the jazz world of New York. Repertoire has either been specially chosen for the occasion or specially composed to go along with the classic markers opening with Mingus' Nostalgia in Times Square and closing with another classic Harlem Nocturne. The disc is going to be recognised as the standard for a flute-led album sooner or later. Repertoire will be one of the reasons why. The other reason will be the outstandingly memorable contributions from each of the players from the first not to the last. *Raul da Gama*

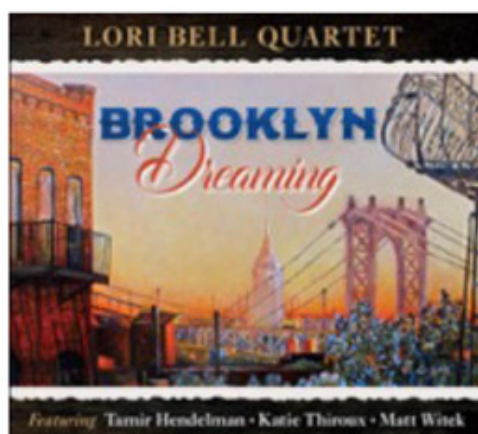


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CD REVIEWS

LORI BELL: *Brooklyn Dreaming*

By Ted Burke, February 2016



In the 1970s and early '80s I worked at the Summer House Inn in La Jolla as a combination desk clerk, switchboard operator, bell man, reservationist, and whatever odd job that needed to be done that didn't require driving the company car. It was an okay job, nothing great, but the greatest benefit of working there was that Elario's, at the time one of the best jazz clubs in Southern California, was perched on 11th floor of the high-rise. It was at Elario's where I was introduced to the music of Brooklyn native and San Diego resident Lori Bell, a jazz flautist (or flutist?) in live performance. Playing with the very fine pianist Dave McKay and with her own groups, Bell's flute work was a revelation of sorts. Her tone is firm and she shows a virtuoso's command of the sounds it produces. Whether digging into the sub-atomic emotions that are the genius of the blues, releasing a torrent of inspired runs on the obstacle course complexities of bop or the nuanced, minor key subtleties of a ballad, Lori Bell played her flute in any fashion she

chose. Delicacy and strength, firm and rhythmic, unfaltering and malleable, hers is a sound with verve and lyricism.

That said, Bell has released her ninth studio album, *Brooklyn Dreaming*, a tribute to her place of birth and where her heart and roots remain. She is joined here by Matt Witek on drums, Tami Hendelman on piano, and Katie Thiroux on bass, an ensemble reveling in what seems like telepathic communication during in both the softer and more dynamic album selections. The album is a tribute to the vital elan of Bell's fabled native grounds, but over anything else this album's main attraction are the top shelf performances. These sessions wails, soars and swings on the good grace of superb musicianship.

Noteworthy are the hard-charging interpretations on the twisting turns of Charlie Mingus' "Nostalgia in Times Square"; brisk, given to fast tempo changes and the odd quirks Mingus is known for in his writing, Bell's solo is magnificent, building with simple statements and gradually accelerating the speed, upping the ante, and dancing on the edge of the rhythm section's sublimely kept pace. Bell's original compositions—"Times Squared," "Brooklyn Dreaming," "A Dog on Coney"—provide what we can take as the New York attitude: fast, in-your-face, loquacious, but friendly and swinging. Bell finds the mood, explores the variations, makes it all swing, her notes precise and rounded, fleeting and wild in their spirit. Hendelman's piano work has that extra-sensory element suggested from before. His chord voicings chime magically to provide a suitable push and texture to the ensemble, and his solos are rich complements to Bell's, matching her in stratospheric outlay of ideas but adding his own deft touches. Half chords, short runs, and bell-tone octaves make him the necessary musician to have around. Likewise, the teamwork of the Witek and Thiroux rhythm section move this wonderfully realized session with an ease dually dynamic and apt. The songs cover a wide swath of styles, and the team is there, keeping the pace lively, varied, soaring. I would ask that the musicians take a bow, one by one, for the fine work they created for this very fine album. *Ted Burke*



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Lori Bell

Brooklyn Dreaming

Lori Bell leads a quartet with pianist Tamir Hendelman, Matt Witek on drums and bassist Katie Thiroux. Bell composed six of the nine selections, arranged and produced all of the music in addition to playing a sweet jazzy flute. Brooklyn Dreaming is a strong vibrant statement in modern jazz that kept our attention through multiple listening sessions!

4/4
Lori Bell
Bebop
2015



Photo: Lori Bell