

is the essence of modern impressionistic jazz for me. Each song and its title conveys different places, people and times of day and Hilton fully realizes her concept of taking the listener with her across the full range of her feelings. Hilton was once upon a time thought of as a smooth jazz pianist but with her last CD *"American Impressions"* (Ruby Slippers Productions 2012) and this one she has blossomed into a modern jazz pianist to be reckoned with. I find this a knockout experience and one for those who love the mainstream or modern impressionistic jazz trio play.

- **Craig Taborn, "Chants" (ECM 2013)** follows on the heels of Taborn's solo outing in 2011 on ECM *"Avenging Angel"* and is another very original set of nine pieces, this time in a trio with **Gerald Cleaver** on bass and **Thomas Morgan** on drums. This is clearly a partnership and not solely a piano-led trio outing, with all three instruments clearly driving the car at various times, or contributing interesting parts to make up a wonderfully rich and interesting listen. I confess that I did not have this with me on the way to New Jersey, but did have it in advance of tomorrow's release, and I did want to include it here as it moves the meter a bit more to the free and open, avant garde/spiky side of the continuum. But it doesn't fully reach that side -- it is not at all spiky and instead features a concentration on melodies and counterpoint, on a palette of varying sounds and atmospheric interest, and on the use of space to let the songs breathe. Cool stuff that I categorize as modern free jazz, a category that I would include players like Jason Morn and Vijay Iyer in as well. Definitely not for those in the mainstream but in the wheelhouse of those liking new modernistic piano trios.



- **Han Bennick with Uri Caine, Sonic Boom (816 Music 2013)** tips my needle fully to the modern, avante garde side with its wildly free range music by **Bennick** on drums and **Caine** on piano. Thus the picture of Lisbeth Salander, a great representation of the music herein. And yet not all of it can be characterized in that manner, as a song like *"Furious Urious"*, an original sounds like something that would come out of any forward thinking modern mainstream jazz group. It has a strong melody, a flowing sound, and typical bass and drum rhythms propelling it. On the other hand, the CD starts with the drum set, then a series of short staccato piano notes forming a sort of melody that ranges around the entire keyboard, gradually moving into a more structured set of notes in the right hand with a still staccato undertone from the left hand and the drums. Not a traditional that quickly breaks down again into a free range set of chords, runs, and drum beats. A really dynamic, adventurous, and highly pleasing modernistic approach to music. The second piece *"Grind of Blue"* opens as a more or less traditional sounding piece, with a quiet piano melody and supporting drums and switches gradually into a free form piece. *"Round Midnight"* is the sole piece here not written/free improvised by the duo and is a fascinating take. the melody is there in pieces but the construct is very different with lots of short runs and furious drumming, and then short pieces of softer sounds and lyricism. Back and forth and very captivating. Overall the CD is a fascinating combination of inside and outside sections, creative intellects at work, and dynamic play.



Eight CDs and I like them all, from the smoothest and most inside to the jagged and intriguing avant garde. See which fit your tastes, and even try to expand them. It won't hurt too much!