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# They’re in town as sidemen, but Fabian Almazan and Jason Rigby shine as leaders on their own recent records

Posted By Peter Margasak on 10.13.17 at 01:58 PM

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Jason Rigby and Fabian Almazan

RIGBY BY PETER GANNUSHKIN / DOWNTOWNMUSIC.NET; ALMAZAN COURTESY THE ARTIST

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Fink has been tinkering with trashy, exuberant garage



Powerhouse drummer Mark Guiliana gives two performances with his agile quartet Sunday night at Constellation (the first show sold out, so a second has been added at 10 PM). His terrific band features players who lead their own projects, and two of them, Cuban-born pianist Fabian Almazan and Cleveland-based saxophonist Jason Rigby, have released strong records this year that illustrate their range—their approaches are very different from the fusion-informed rhythmic aggression and complexity of Guiliana's band.

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On Almazan's ambitious, richly orchestrated *Alcanza* (Biophilia), the pianist sculpts buoyant, imperturbable grooves with bassist Linda May Han Oh and drummer Henry Cole, which provide a springboard for the melodic acrobatics of clear-voiced singer-guitarist Camila Meza and an agile string quartet. When a jazz artist adds strings, they often feel like oversweet ornamentation, but Almazan makes them crucial to his arrangements. Sometimes they shadow specific chord progressions (as on the magisterial "Marea Baja," the second movement of the album's nine-part suite), but more often they participate in the contrapuntal melodies or carry the emotional weight of a piece (as on "Verla," which infuses their classical voicings with the distinctively South American lyricism that Meza's Spanish-language singing imparts elsewhere).

Below you can hear the epic "Cazador Antiguo," the seventh movement of the suite. Propelled by a seductively stentorian rhythm, the piece gradually builds tension—the strings get heavier and heavier, and Meza's wordless singing digs in deeper and deeper. Sometimes the music gets a bit too florid for my tastes, but I can always appreciate Almazan's exquisite craft.

punk for 25 years, and "Brand New Kid" combines melody and pell-mell drive.

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Rigby's recent *One* (Fresh Sound New Talent) delivers a much more visceral and wide-open sound. On this album he leads his Detroit-Cleveland Trio, named after the cities from which its members hail: bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Gerald Cleaver are from Detroit, and Rigby is from Cleveland. The trio's music is fiery and lean—Rigby's extended solos connect 50s hard bop to 60s free jazz—but the detailed focus of the shape-shifting rhythm section always keeps things under control. As excited as I am by the driving energy of album opener "Dive Bar," I'm equally impressed by the ballad "Dorian Gray," which you can check out below. The song braids its tender melody, flush with fluttery accents and voiced in a wonderfully striated tone, into a mellow groove that retains a certain bounce despite its pace. Rigby largely sticks to tenor on the album, and when he occasionally switches to soprano, his sinuous playing is biting and dry.





[Jason Rigby](#)  
Dorian Gray

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- Chet Baker, *It Could Happen to You* (OJC/Riverside)
- Claudio Rocchi, *Suoni di Frontiera* (Die Schachtel)
- Prurient & Kevin Drumm, *All Are Guests in the House of the Lord* (Hospital Productions)
- Nick Photinos, *Petits Artéfacts* (New Amsterdam)
- Neil Young, *Live at the Cellar Door* (Reprise)

Tags: Mark Guiliana, Jason Rigby, Fabian Almazan, One, Dorian Gray, Alcanza, Gerald Cleaver, Cameron Brown, Henry Cole, Linda May Han Oh, Cazador Antinguo, Video, Image

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