

# Excerpts of reviews of “Early Morning Star” (FRM, 2020) and “Infinite Spirit: Revisiting the Music of the Mwandishi Band” (FRM, 2016)

## Bob Gluck: Early Morning Star (FMR CD 569), 2020

### Highlights from reviews

#### **António Branco, jazz.pm (Portugal), January 12, 2021**

<https://www.jazz.pt/ponto-escuta/2021/01/12/bob-gluck-early-morning-star-fmr/>

(4-stars) “*Early Morning Star* is a comforting and soothing album in strange times; let’s celebrate it ... [Tani Tabbal’s] drums in a delicious whirlwind... [bassist Ken] Filiano [plays] a solo that one feels like listening to again and again... [In] Gluck’s solo ... the central motif is developed with refinement and patience... [later there is] a true “tour-de-force” for clarinetist [Kinan Azmeh], who exhibits all his melodic sensitivity. Wolper again shows her skills as a singular improviser...”

#### **Seth Rogovoy, Chronogram, October 1, 2020**

<https://www.chronogram.com/hudsonvalley/bob-gluck-early-morning-star/Content?oid=11430936>

“...presents a remarkably unified sound and vision that can only be called Bob Gluck music... featuring the siren-like sounds of Kinan Azmeh's clarinet atop some gorgeously chaotic vamping by Woodstock drummer Tani Tabbal and bassist Ken Filiano ... [Gluck’s] spacious arrangement across the piano keyboard boasts orchestral depth... the pristine sound fully breathes as if you are in the room with the musicians.”

#### **D. Oscar Groomes, O's Place Jazz Newsletter, September 9, 2020**

<http://www.OsPlaceJazz.com>

“The musicians are fueled by the collective energy.”

#### **Jerome Wilson, All About Jazz, August 17, 2020**

[https://www.allaboutjazz.com/early-morning-star-bob-gluck-fmr-records\\_31146?width=2560](https://www.allaboutjazz.com/early-morning-star-bob-gluck-fmr-records_31146?width=2560)

“... The formal, declarative music produced by Gluck, clarinetist Kinan Azmeh and vocalist Andrea Wolper is given flow and earthiness by the rhythmic pull of bassist Ken Filiano and drummer Tani Tabbal... Andrea Wolper consistently stands out when she appears, singing in a high, compelling voice... she is the stirring heart of politically conscious songs ... offering a calm but powerful call to arms in the midst of circling clarinet and piano. She also brings warmth and passion to "Not For Today." Her multi-tracked and delayed voice becomes increasingly delirious in the midst of Gluck's florid piano, the rhythm section's tumbling groove and Azmeh's oozing wails over the top... Everyone plays and sings at their most sensitive [on "Tzur Mishelo/Los Bilbilico"]. Wolper's voice is really sad and sensual and Gluck's playing is radiant. There is a quiet, compelling humanity to this music. It has a seriousness of purpose but also carries a sense of play and adventure.

#### **George Harris, Jazz Weekly: Creative Music and other forms of Avant Garde, August 6, 2020**

<https://www.jazzweekly.com/2020/08/bob-gluck-early-morning-star/>

“... elliptical moods to impressionistic effect ... prismatic tones.”

#### **Doc Wendell, L.A. Jazz Scene, July 9, 2020A. Jazz Scene**

<http://lajazzscene.buzz/docs-spot/>

“...one of the most prolific jazz pianists and composers on the scene for many years now. *Early Morning Star* is ... one of his most ambitious works to date... [His] piano work is contemplative and dynamic. The rhythm section is focused and tight. “Flowing” ... is haunting and one of the album’s highlights. Kinan Azmeh’s clarinet soars while having a musical conversation with Filiano and Gluck... Gluck’s piano work cements everything together with

grace and elegance... an excellent piece of avant-garde jazz for today's times and is guaranteed to satisfy old fans of Gluck while attracting new ones. Don't miss it."

Twitter text: Doc Wendell (L.A. Jazz Scene) reviews *Early Morning Star*: "Don't miss it. Bob Gluck's piano work is... contemplative and dynamic... grace and elegance. Rhythm section [Tabbal & Filiano] is focused and tight. @kinanazmeh's clarinet soars."

**Tom Haugen, Take Effect Reviews, June 21, 2020**

<https://takeeffectreviews.com/june-2020-2/2020/6/21/bob-gluck>

"8/10. Wolper's vocal acrobatics... Azmeh's energetic clarinet prowess ... Gluck's keys offer[ing] much beauty and playfulness... Tabbal's sharp drumming... Filiano's deft bass playing... [the music] glides with mystery in the cultured, rich, mash up finish... the themes of social justice and improvisational interplay make it one of his best to date... brimming with dynamic musicianship."

**Grady Harp, Amazon Reviews, June 15, 2020**

[https://www.amazon.com/review/R26OPR71U8T17K/ref=pe\\_1098610\\_137716200\\_cm\\_rv\\_eml\\_rv0\\_rv](https://www.amazon.com/review/R26OPR71U8T17K/ref=pe_1098610_137716200_cm_rv_eml_rv0_rv)

"5.0 out of 5 stars. This is music for our time and our hope. Hauntingly beautiful!"

**Anne Carlini, Exclusive Magazine, June 11, 2020**

[http://www.annecarlini.com/ex\\_cd.php?id=3095](http://www.annecarlini.com/ex_cd.php?id=3095)

One of my Top 10 albums of the year thus far! ... gently lush, smoothly operatic ... dulcet majesty of reflective expressions ... quiet piano elegance ... ornately growing ambiance ... sumptuous piano work ... coming to a close on the delicately grand opulence of 'Tzur Mishelo/Los Bilbilco.'

Anne Carlini, Exclusive Magazine: "already become one of my Top 10 albums of the year thus far! ... gently lush, smoothly operatic ... dulcet majesty of reflective expressions ... the frenetic, yet warmly controlled ... wistful ... sumptuous piano work ... delicately grand opulence..." Pre-release @ <https://bobgluck.bandcamp.com/album/early-morning-star>

**Leonid Auskern, Jazzquad (Russia), June 9, 2020**

<https://jazzquad.ru/index.pl?act=PRODUCT&id=5580>

Gluck is of course a high-class musician. The music of the album is more atonal than the familiar mainstream. Ken Filiano and Tani Tabbal comprise a powerful rhythm section. There are many "tasty" solos by Azmeh and Filiano. Andrea Wolper's vocal skills which brilliantly transform every track according to the context of the composition are beyond praise. So, if you are interested in such an unusual master as Bob Gluck, do not miss this album.

**Karl Ackermann, All About Jazz, June 1, 2020**

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/early-morning-star-bob-gluck-fmr-records>

"Stratified charts, complex patterns, balance, and free improvisation are hallmarks of Gluck's work but change is the only constant in his music... This underrecognized virtuoso, and this gifted group of musicians, continue to bring these elements [the rudimentary systems of jazz music, its fundamentals, and its past] together on *Early Morning Star*."

**JP's Music Blog, May 31, 2020**

<http://www.jpsmusicblog.com/2020/05/new-jazz-releases-from-bob-gluck-and.html>

"... the beautifully elegant delivery of the title-song, 'Early Morning Star,' [is heard] before the excitingly experimental instrumental piece 'Emerge-ency.' The sweet piano chords of 'For Today,' showcase the talents of Bob Gluck, as he portrays emotions through his fingers. The energy picks up with the swift rhythm of 'Here Now,' before finishing the album with the playful duet between the clarinet and bass on the instrumental 'Today, Today,' along with the jazzy mash-up of the traditional Jewish song 'Tzur Mishelo/Los Bilbilicos.'

**Jonathan Widran, The JW Vibe, May 21, 2020**

<https://www.jwvibe.com/post/bob-gluck-early-morning-star>

“... one of the most sonically engaging and awakening temple services you’ll likely ever experience. A masterful collaborator throughout his multi-faceted career, Gluck complements his soulful/lyrical and more boisterous instrumentals with vocals by “cantor” (actually, the emotionally rangy veteran jazz singer) Andrea Wolper that, via religious texts and secular exhortations, cry out for justice, common sense solutions (the environmental themed ‘Friday Song’) and human connection (sometimes via romantic connection, a la ‘Early Morning Star,’ which quotes from *Song of Solomon*)...”

**Bruce Lee Gallanter, Downtown Music Gallery, May 1, 2020**

[http://www.downtownmusicgallery.com/newsletter\\_detail.php?newsID=2121](http://www.downtownmusicgallery.com/newsletter_detail.php?newsID=2121)

“The sound of the quintet is some[thing] special ... I am impressed with the way that Gluck draws from Jewish melodies/songs which [Andrea] Wolper sings tastefully and the rest of the quintet also play with subtle passion. Gluck’s writing on ‘Emerge-ency’ is deep and probing, allowing the instrumental part of the quintet to soar with intensity... The soul of these songs is often rooted in rich and ancient sounding melodies... this disc is yet another gem from the deep FMR treasure chest of delights.”

**Dick Metcalf (*Rotcod Zzaj*), Contemporary Fusion Reviews, May 1, 2020**

<https://contemporaryfusionreviews.com/passionate-captivating-improvisation/>

“Passionate captivating improvisation ... The interplay between bass and clarinet during the intro for ‘Today Today’ is superb, and the recording is flawless... when Bob’s keyboard joins in at the 2:35 mark, the tune soars off into the stratosphere... a great performance. I give Bob and his players a most highly recommended rating, with an “EQ” (energy quotient) score of 4.98 [out of 5.0].”

**Tom Hull, Music Week, Saturday, April 18, 2020**

“engaging” B+”

<http://www.tomhull.com/ocston/blog/archives/2847-Music-Week.html>

## **Bob Gluck, Billy Hart, Eddie Henderson, Christopher Dean Sullivan: “Infinite Spirit: Revisiting Music of the Mwandishi Band” (FMR 398), 2016**

### **Highlights from reviews**

**Karl Ackermann, All About Jazz, Saturday, April 4, 2016**

“In the hands of Gluck's quartet, the cover pieces are cleaner, punchier and feel completely modern. Hancock's ‘Sleeping Giant’ opens with a bracing four-minute drum solo augmented with Gluck's subdued electronics. Gluck comes in on piano, toying with harmony and managing to be both spiky and graceful. **Henderson's solo is remarkable; earthy and freewheeling, he's never sounded better.**... Maupin's "Quasar" features a meditative opening from the pianist, taken over by an expansively melodic Henderson solo. Sullivan's pulsing movement seamlessly guides the piece through multiple transitions... This is an extraordinary album filled with great music, each piece running into double-digit playing times. Hart and Henderson are ageless wonders, sounding as if they are just hitting their prime. The empathy among players is clear. It may be somewhat sacrilegious to say, but Gluck and company have taken this music into the new millennium and made it their own, more energetic and focused and a start-to-finish joy to listen to.”

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/infinite-spirit-revisiting-music-of-the-mwandishi-band-bob-gluck-billy-hart-eddie-henderson-christopher-dean-sullivan-fmr-records-review-by-karl-ackermann.php#.VwLPHnUfcEc.facebook>

Doug Simpson, [Audiophile Audition](#), March 20, 2016

\*\*\* 1/2 “...imbued with groove, creativity, and crisscrosses respect for the original music with an inventive perspective... [Henderson’s] beautiful tone escalates the melodic emotionalism, and “Sleeping Giant” blooms into a buoyant undertaking... [“You’ll Know When You Get There”] telescopes into outer space and microscopes into inner space... There are multiple dramatic turns, which impart a drifting shift and radiating movement, from gentle moments such as Gluck’s plaintive piano solo, to upfront and somewhat jarring sections where instruments

seemingly collide against each other... “Sideways/Quasar” progresses into celestial regions, guided by Henderson’s luminous and airy trumpet, underlying electronic effects... and Gluck’s wide-open acoustic piano soloing... [On “Water Torture”] the foursome furnishes an offhand, funky foundation, which fluctuates between a swinging foray and an abstracted disposition.”

<http://www.audaud.com/bob-gluck-billy-hart-eddie-henderson-christopher-dean-sullivan-infinite-spirit-revisiting-music-of-the-mwandishi-band-fmr/>

John Ephland, Down Beat, March 2016

Positive: “... the album begins on a good note, with inimitable touches from Hart’s drumming ... the group eventually landing in a free-jazz zone... [and on]... Maupin’s “Water Torture,” Gluck’s selective electronics (with some defining piano playing) and have firmly taken on the spirit of Maupin’s title to this song.” Summary of the negative: “... occasional electronics that seem mostly superfluous, and nary a groove one can dance to... [tunes that are] dim outlines of their former selves... electronics sound like they belong in an arcade game... no real grooves are established anywhere... meandering arco bass... goes on way too long... without an obvious link to the theme... stalwart but incoherent pace....”

George W. Harris, Jazz Weekly: Creative Music and other forms of Avant Garde,  
February 25, 2016

<http://www.jazzweekly.com/2016/02/herbie-the-love-buginfinite-spirit-revisiting-music-of-the-mwandishi-band/>

“[the musicians]... re-visit a handful of the pieces with a more modern feel and attitude. Hart makes his presence known at the starting gun, with a long drum intro to the 13 minute “Sleeping Giant” before the rest of the team follows suit and Gluck takes Hancock’s themes and spreads them over a tablecloth. A sprawling 17-minute read of “You’ll Know When You Get There” mix Sullivan’s droning bass with electronic musings veering around Henderson’s horn, with “Sideways/Quasar” being the most in-pocket tune here. Henderson’s horn glows warm embers throughout, particularly on the sole new tune “Spirit Unleashed” which has more time changes than a trans-Siberian train ride, while the relentless “Water Torture” closes the album with a free spirited party kept together with the pulsating Hart.”

Ron Weinstock, Jazz & Blues Report, March/April 2016 (Issue 365)

“... the wonderful development of Hancock’s motif’s on “Sleeping Giant” from Gluck on piano along with the haunting playing of Henderson as well as Hart’s superb drumming (and Sullivan is a rock on bass) gets mesmerizing... [There is in] “Spirits Unleashed,” another display of Henderson’s ability to paint a mood, and then some musical fireworks between him and Gluck with the electronic effects at the end... An intriguing recording...”

<http://www.jazz-blues.com/pdf/JazzBlues365.pdf>

Joel Roberts, New York City Jazz Record, March 2016

“... [Gluck] and his quartet (featuring two Mwandishi veterans in trumpeter Eddie Henderson and the great Billy Hart on drums) present extended, open-ended versions of classic compositions and let the music guide them to unforeseen places. The best example of this is the group’s gorgeous, acoustic take on Hancock’s enigmatically titled “You’ll Know When You Get There”, an expansive tune featuring moments of pure poetry and ecstasy from all members of the quartet. Like Hancock, Gluck is a master of electronics, as well as a talented acoustic jazz pianist. For the most part, his electronic textures fit seamlessly within the album’s overall concept, as in the spacey intro to Hancock’s “Sleeping Giant”, a sprawling composition eventually giving way to a hard-driving funk section propelled by propulsive piano and energetic trumpet... [Overall] this group effectively captures the spirit of the Mwandishi band, putting a fresh and personal imprint on complex music and propelling it into the present day. Gluck and company have made a worthwhile tribute to Hancock, but more importantly created an album that stands tall all on its own.”

Raul de Gama, JazzdaGama, April 1, 2016

“[This is] a record of almost primordial excitement that uncoils with a whiplash to present some of the finest music that you will hear on record this year... *Infinite Spirit Revisiting Music of the Mwandishi Band* is a masterpiece in concept and execution. This quartet plays Mwandishi music with exceptionally clean articulation in flashes of virtuosity, and elegance in lyricism. Each of the pieces is vividly characterized, with Gluck, Hart, Henderson (especially Henderson) and Sullivan running the gamut between dark turbulence and pastoral tranquility with

absolute assurance. None of the musicians waste energy trying to find novel approaches – they simply let the music speak, exercising restraint where lesser musicians might take liberties. But their playing remains full-blooded and scintillating.... one of finest homages to the music of Herbie Hancock and that electrifying era.”

<http://jazzdagama.com/cds/bob-gluck-infinite-spirit/>

Leonid Auskern, Jazzquad, Russia

“... By deploying a large canvas, Gluck provides the performers with sufficient sonic space to realize the spirit of the original Mwandishi ensemble... Present across this entire album are outstanding solos (especially by Henderson, who plays both open and muted trumpet); excellent work by the rhythm section; complex musical forms, melody and spirituality; lyricism and passion; and a mixture of acoustic and electronic sound (each of the compositions is densely ornamented with electronic sounds by Bob Gluck). These two veteran Mwandishi band members and two enthusiasts of this music have created a work that stands on its own, regardless of its relationship to the original Hancock Sextet album. For my taste, the original Mwandishi spirit lives in this recording; it is simultaneously very modern and deeply rooted in tradition...”

<http://jazzquad.ru/index.pl?act=PRODUCT&id=4306>

Textura, April 2016 (133) (Canada)

“Not only honouring the Mwandishi band's legacy but also creating something new through their alchemical interactions. Ultimately the set is as much about the creative interplay of this particular grouping of musicians as it is Hancock... One of my favourite moments occurs almost nine minutes into Hancock's ‘You'll Know When You Get There’ when a lyrical eight-chord piano motif, designed by the composer as a bridge, repeats over and over, bringing structural clarity to the piece. The episode arrives after an extended opening featuring Henderson and Gluck emoting over percussive textures and bass bowing, and eventually develops into an elaborate piano solo that invites empathetic responses from the others and an expressive bass coda by Sullivan... Throughout the disc, Gluck's bold pianisms obviously evoke Hancock's playing but vestiges of McCoy Tyner and Don Pullen emerge, too. All five pieces push past the ten-minute mark, a move that allows the musicians ample opportunity to explore and stretch out. It's exactly the kind of thing material of this kind calls for, and the open-ended vibe allows for musically adventurous ensemble playing at a high level. “

[http://ww.w.textura.org/reviews/infinitespirit\\_mwandishiband.htm](http://ww.w.textura.org/reviews/infinitespirit_mwandishiband.htm)

Phil Freeman, *The Wire*, June 2016 (388),

“... Gluck is a solid pianist, his synth work is intriguing, and the arrangements maintain a lot of the tension that underpinned the hypnotic explorations of the original records. Hart's drumming has an ominous quality, like it was preparing for an explosion that never happens, and Sullivan's bass, whether bowed, plucked, or strummed, gives the music an almost ritualistic power. “You'll Know When You Get There” has a deep, almost undersea abstraction, Henderson's muted trumpet crying in the background as Gluck's piano and the thick, droning bass occupy the foreground.”

Mike Gates, *UK Vibe*, February 1, 2016

“[‘Infinite Spirit’ is]... a new exploration of a selection of Mwandishi tunes, rather than just a modern day take on what has been before... It is indeed that searching spirit that inspires some great collaborative music throughout this album. Often conversational, questioning and textural, there are a plentitude of robust grooves and melodic lyricism on offer. Creative improvisations abound, with Gluck's inventive piano playing and Henderson's astute trumpet playing both being a high point throughout. The music evolves as it is performed, allowing all four musicians to play an important role in their own inimitable way. The album opens in pensive mood, with Billy Hart slowly but surely laying the foundation for “Sleeping Giant” to develop. Sprawling and spiralling acoustic piano blends beautifully with Henderson's crisp, exploratory horn. Evident throughout the session is the reflective interplay and searching nature of the music. “You'll Know When You Get There” is the perfect example of how tuned into each other these guys are as an acoustic quartet. It's such a good sound...”

[http://ukvibe.org/sans\\_frontier/bob-gluck/](http://ukvibe.org/sans_frontier/bob-gluck/)

Bruce Lee Gallanter, Downtown Music Gallery

“It has been more than forty years since those old Mwandishi albums were made, yet the melodies/songs themselves sounds fresh, vital and inspired throughout this new masterwork. Much like the original versions (often side-long works), the pieces here are relatively long and take their time to unwind and flow. On the opening track, “Sleeping

Giant", Mr. Gluck uses subtle, spinning electronics to give this a more mysterious sound, never overdoing the sonic seasoning. I can also hear the spirit/influence of Miles Davis here as well. Which makes sense since Mr. Hancock spent five years (1964-1969) as a member of the Miles Davis Quintet, before forming his own electric band. All four members of this splendid quartet are integral to the success of this unit. This is a studio session, recorded at Tedesco Studios in Paramus, NJ and the sound is superb. Both Eddie Henderson and Billy Hart are 75 and continue to lead bands and collaborate with other veterans and young lions. Both sound marvelous here as do Mr. Gluck and Mr. Sullivan. Without any doubt, this is one of the year's finest jazz recordings. Grab it now before it appears on many best of lists and we run out." – [http://search2.downtownmusicgallery.com/lookup.cgi?item=2015\\_12\\_24\\_17\\_54\\_21](http://search2.downtownmusicgallery.com/lookup.cgi?item=2015_12_24_17_54_21)

Kevin Le Gendre, JazzWise, Mar 2015

"... part of the interesting, and achievement, of this session is precisely the point it makes about the magic of the original music, namely that it had an unbreakable creative core that would jore than withstand the downscaling of the sextet to a quartet. Gluck displays an assured touch on the piano, Henderson's brass still has a flinty edge and drummer Hart remains a master of both power and control. In any case their cohesion and focus highlight Mwandishi as an exponent of superior ambient music as well as jazz. An extra twist is that this new music is largely acoustic rather than electroacoustic and the richness of the textures, especially Sullivan's swooning double bass, is such that the music doesn't feel at all flimsy. Working with predominantly sombre arrangements, the band makes a fair fist of invoking the 'infinite spirit' of the source material, but wisely steer it to another place."