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Jazz

# Vijay Iyer Trio: Accelerando - Brad Mehldau Trio: Ode - Romain Collin: The Calling - Andrea Veneziani Trio featuring Kenny Werner: Oltreoceano

By **Jeff Simon**

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Here is a sudden explosion of superb jazz piano trio discs.

All but 61-year-old Kenny Werner are of the jazz piano generation that is now large and in charge and proving itself to be stunning on disc — 41-year-old pianists Vijay Iyer and Brad Mehldau and 32-year-old French pianist Romain Collin.

Iyer—who's performed at the Albright-Knox “Art of Jazz” series — grew up in Rochester and has turned out to be a formidable blend of the abstract and the visceral. He virtually says as much: “Jazz has always had some sort of dance impulse at its core...I never want to lose that foundation of rhythmic communication in my work. That’s what ‘Accelerando’ is concerned with, that physical reality of music. For me music is action.” His tremolos and ostinati as well as his accelerandos prove the point abundantly.

This is a follow-up to the Iyer Trio’s 2009 beauty “Historicity.” His bassist is Stephen Crump and his drummer is still Roy Haynes’

grandson Marcus Gilmore. The originals are all impressive but his versions of tunes by Ellington, Herbie Nichols and Henry Threadgill tell a story of terrific jazz “historicity” while his “trio extension” of Michael Jackson’s “Human Nature” is a monstrously effective bit of neo-Ahmad Jamal.

Mehldau’s “Ode” is a collection of originals by the leading intellectual of contemporary jazz piano written for his trio with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jeff Ballard. There are “odes” to his wife and son, the late Michael Brecker, guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, Aquaman and the character played by Jack Nicholson in “Easy Rider,” which ought to indicate Mehldau’s cultural world. The playing by Mehldau and his two trio-mates is as impressive and intuitive as any this side of Keith Jarrett’s Standards Trio.

Andrea Veneziani is a 34-year-old Italian bass player who had the great good fortune to hook up in New York with the great pianist Werner, his teacher at New York University. Though his disc with Werner is called “Oltreoceano” (which translates as “overseas”), it sounds very New York to American ears with Werner playing some of his most adventurous and challenging work in a long while.

French pianist Romain Collin isn’t quite in Iyer’s, Mehldau’s or Werner’s class, but he’s already an accomplished pianist with even greater promise.

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## **Vijay Iyer Trio**

Accelerando

[ACT]

4 stars

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## **Brad Mehldau Trio**

Ode

[Nonesuch]

3 1/2 stars

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## **Romain Collin**

The Calling

[Palmetto ]

3 stars

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## **Andrea Veneziani Trio featuring Kenny Werner**

Oltreoceano

[Self Released]

3 1/2 stars

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