

The Year in Review: Top 50 Albums of 2019

JazzTimes' critics choose the top 40 new albums and top 10 historical releases of the year

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The Branford Marsalis Quartet (left to right: Marsalis, Justin Faulkner, Eric Revis, and Joey Calderazzo) made the best jazz album of 2019, according to *JazzTimes'* critics. (photo: Eric Ryan Anderson)

We calculated our top 40 new releases and top 10 historical/reissue recordings of 2019 based on year-end lists by our writers. They were asked to choose the 10 best new releases and five best historical titles—i.e., albums and box sets consisting primarily of music recorded 10 or more years ago. To see each voter's ballot, skip ahead to page 6 of this feature. Albums and box sets released between Nov. 10, 2018 and Nov. 9, 2019 were eligible. Some discs may have slipped through the cracks, however, as official release dates shifted or weren't available.

Blurbs by Philip Booth, Thomas Conrad, J.D. Considine, Morgan Enos, Steve Greenlee, Geoffrey Himes, Matthew Kassel, Ken Micallef, Mac Randall, Britt Robson, Jeff Tamarkin, and Chris J. Walker

Branford Marsalis Quartet

THE SECRET BETWEEN THE SHADOW AND THE SOUL



1. Branford Marsalis Quartet *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul* (Okeh)

That some will talk trash about the Marsalis brothers forever is a given. Wynton and Branford are jazz warriors unafraid to chart their individual courses against trend, against style, against East and West Coast jazz divisions. Branford and pianist Joey Calderazzo live in the South, bassist Eric Revis in L.A., and drummer Justin Faulkner wherever his hat falls; this seeming group dislocation is mirrored in the oddly open-ended but focused splendor of *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul*. While many pay mere lip service to the idea of free

expression, the Quartet raise the creative stakes to incendiary levels, adding classical and operatic influences to the common jazz menu of blues, swing, and solos, with searing group interplay. An hour of envelope-smashing improvisations, the record tilts on Revis' rowdy "Dance of the Evil Toys" and Calderazzo's stately "Conversation Among the Ruins," while Marsalis' "Life Filtering from the Water Flowers" battles through nearly 10 minutes of nose-diving improvisations and refined instrumental ballistics. Andrew Hill's "Snake Hip Waltz" and Keith Jarrett's "The Windup" form the opposing poles of this album's bipolar but beautiful character. **K.M.**