

## IN PRINT



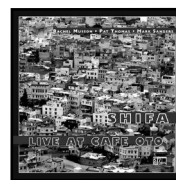
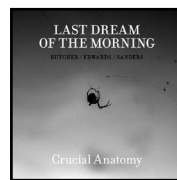
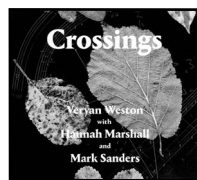
**Chasin' The Bird (Charlie Parker in California)**  
**Dave Chisholm with Peter Markowski (Z2 Comics)**  
 by Elliott Simon

With a two-month residency at Billy Berg's L.A. Jazz Club, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie brought bebop to the West Coast. *Chasin' the Bird* is a graphic novel that examines a portion of Bird's time there. The events that led up to Bird's stay at Camarillo State Hospital, subsequent release and famous resurgent performance at Jack's Basket Room provide fertile material for author/artist Dave Chisholm and colorist Peter Markowski to chronicle Parker's highs and lows and add to his legend. The 2020 release coincides with the centennial of Parker's birth and is set to include recordings from this time period.

Chisholm is a trumpet player and educator with a deep understanding of Parker's revolutionary contributions to modern jazz but the story he tells is contemporary. Frank discussion of racial inequality and police brutality coupled with the "Breath" that comes out of Bird's saxophone when he plays are chilling in their immediacy while Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's foreword candidly places the past into the present. Chisholm also plays with the vagaries of memory and the astute reader can discover out-of-place elements as six distinct narrators describe Parker's disappearances, public nudity, drug addiction and hedonism. More interesting though are their memories of Bird's thirst for knowledge and quest for universal truth as they relate to his music and being Black in America. Markowski's exceptional coloring is the soundtrack to Chisholm's narrative and as Parker's life spirals downward the music turns monochromatic.

Save for Gillespie, who is clearly Parker's brother-in arms but exits early, the narrators all end up at Jack's Basket Room after giving singular insights into Bird along the way. Jirayr Zorthian is the "fellow artist", whose ranch was a Bohemian paradise and the setting for a Parker performance that literally turned orgiastic. He and Parker debate the universality of art in the context of the origins of the universe. The "fan" is photographer William Claxton, who lives with his parents in suburbia. His interactions with Bird are among the most interesting and with Claxton's parents away Bird crashes at their house, turns young white suburban kids on to Bach and tells them to remember everything that they practice and then forget it all when you start to play. He and Claxton discuss race in America with Parker opining, "Racism isn't always loud...it's the quiet kind that makes it impossible to relax." Sculptor Julie MacDonald is the "lover" who exposes Parker to her world before the inevitable breakup while John Coltrane, after a heated argument over Parker's admiration for "old white European musicians", sees the future of Black American music after hearing Parker play. Ross Russell, the founder of Dial Records who recorded Parker's most iconic sides, is the "record executive" who takes the reader through Parker's crash and burn and subsequent rebirth. Parker's legend is ever expanding and *Chasin' the Bird* is a unique addition to canon.

For more information, visit [z2comics.com](http://z2comics.com)



**Crossings**  
**Vevyan Weston (Hi4Head)**  
**Crucial Anatomy**  
**Last Dream of the Morning (Trost)**  
**Shifa: Live at Cafe Oto**  
**Rachel Musson/Pat Thomas/Mark Sanders (577 Records)**  
 by Marc Medwin

It is easy for the reviewer, confronted by music difficult to understand, let alone elucidate, to fling adjectives concerning diversity and versatility at the page and hope they stick. Mark Sanders removes all guilt from that verbal association, because it would be difficult to imagine a more multivalent presence in the drum chair. He can make a "New Thing" blowing session swing and a delicately free improvisation shimmer, but he also interjects powerhouse time drumming with just the right balance of groove and freedom to keep a rock-solid sense of swing fresh. This entire continuum of possibility is reflected on these discs, revealing a cross-section of his talent as we celebrate his 60th birthday.

While his wonderful trio with bassist John Edwards and pianist Vevyan Weston is not represented, per se, two of the albums do allow audition of his work in that illustrious company, though the ever-adventurous Weston is at a keystone on *Crossings*. The nine pieces offer up a bewildering but sometimes whimsical array of influence, none more so than on "Extinction". Dig that opening bass groove Weston is laying down, redolent of nothing so much as Stevie Wonder's "Superstition", with Sanders only too willing to join in the fun. The funky groove just begins to sizzle when cellist Hannah Marshall intones the words of William Butler Yeats: "Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths..." Her cello-doubled melody inhabits a space outside but conjoined to everything else, a modal area of "light and half-light" placing Sanders and Weston's sure-fire brick-and-mortar foundation in stark relief. It is a stunningly effective study in time and contrast, mirrored in an even subtler fashion on the aptly titled "Kalimba Setting". Who's got the melody anyway, Weston's "kalimba" or Marshall's wonderful pizzicato? Maybe, it's actually given to Sanders' hi-hat, which we hear transforming, almost without awareness, from exquisite echo and foil to rhythmic pillar.

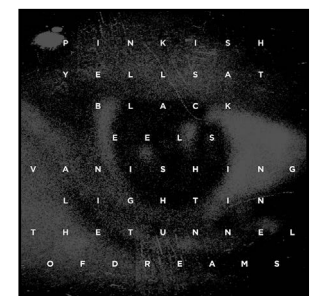
A similar subtlety defines *Crucial Anatomy*, the second album by the trio of Sanders, saxophonist John Butcher and bassist John Edwards. Amid the transparent clarity of malleted toms and blocks, that nasty groove Sanders can set up at any moment just peeks around the corner on "Free from Ghosts" before disappearing again to return in various transformations. Edwards and Sanders are as tight as ever, as their loose but womb-secure interplay opening the microtonally droning "Curling Vine" attests and Butcher may as well be an orchestra unto himself. The composer and improviser Keith Rowe telescopes time by amplifying the clicks made by movements of a steel ruler; Butcher does something similar via staggeringly fast articulation, flutter-tonguing his way toward rapture as the trio intensity slowly builds from atomism toward laminarity. Beyond all of this is the iridescent opening of "Spike Oil", where the obvious percussion comes from Edwards! Butcher and Sanders are in territory initially charted by AMM or Group Ongaku. While Butcher's nearly inaudible rustlings liquify the air, Sanders resonates and brushes parts of his kit in solidarity, several minutes of permeable bliss before the piece takes on something close to an idiom.

Not that the word idiom is meant as a pejorative, as illustrated by the live recordings comprising *Shifa* under the brilliant direction of saxophonist Rachel Musson. She, Sanders and pianist Pat Thomas engage in what could be the most easily categorized of these three

albums, though Thomas' counterpoint on "Improvisation 2" already casts doubt on that statement, prefiguring the complexities of exchanges to come. Shades of those immensely satisfying early European free improv dates are conjured as the trio interacts with all of the rapid-fire communication desired. This is music that also hearkens back to Stockhausen's moment form. Listen starting at 1:29 for one of these pithy moments, explored and then discarded for further adventures. Soprano and snare hit in perfect synchronicity, Musson then revisiting a ripe tone while Sanders crescendos with rolls on metal and skin, Thomas interjecting something miraculously merging block chord and arpeggio. If Sanders spends considerable portions in his non-repetitive and timbrally diverse Tony Oxley bag, he is continually reaching beyond it, as with the multiple traditions he evokes in the first improvisation after Thomas and Musson's rich dialogue. He virtually whispers, cymbal and snare barely breathing past chords and tenor. Of course, the repose doesn't last long in such a dynamic setting.

It is largely down to Sanders' comfort in whatever situation he finds himself, his obvious love of collaboration, that these albums work as well as they do, but every musician in these trio sessions works along similarly symbiotic lines. They create music whose originality may just as often reject or reference the myriad traditions spawning it.

For more information, visit [hi4headrecords.com](http://hi4headrecords.com), [trost.at](http://trost.at) and [577records.com](http://577records.com)



**Vanishing Light in the Tunnel of Dreams**  
**Pinkish Black/Yells at Eels (Ayler)**  
 by Alex Henderson

*Vanishing Light in the Tunnel of Dreams* brings together two very different groups: experimental rock duo Pinkish Black (Daron Beck, keyboards, synthesizer; Jon Teague, drums, synthesizer) and avant garde jazz trio Yells at Eels (Dennis González, trumpet, percussion, who turns 66 this month; and sons Aaron, electric bass, acoustic bass, vocals and Stefan, drums, percussion, marimba). This recording mixes electric avant garde jazz with elements of progressive rock, space rock and funk, the eclecticism partially from the variety of instruments in use. Some of the synthesizers emulate the sound of a crunching rock guitar and, as such, moody offerings such as "The Sorrow of Guernica", "Slow Cascade of Tears" and Middle Eastern-flavored "Heatstroke Mirage" have a great deal of rock energy to go with their electric avant garde jazz improvisation.

The word "moody" definitely applies throughout this CD. "Meditation", the title track and other selections favor the more contemplative and restrained side of avant garde jazz. Darker emotions are often expressed and some of the harmonies recall classic Pink Floyd albums of the '70s such as *Dark Side of the Moon*, *Animals* and *Wish You Were Here* while the influence of Miles Davis' fusion dates of the '70s-80s is impossible to miss during González' spare, introspective trumpet improvisations on "The Sorrow of Guernica", "Meditation" and other selections.

The members of Pinkish Black and Yells at Eels aren't afraid to incorporate many different types of music and the result is an appealing, unexpected departure from the groups' own releases.

For more information, visit [ayler.com](http://ayler.com)